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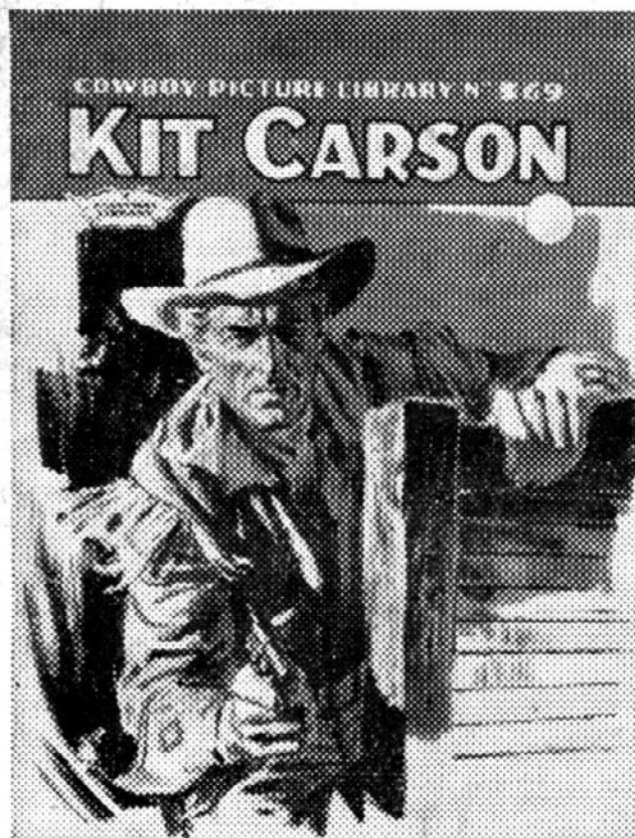
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BREAKING POINT

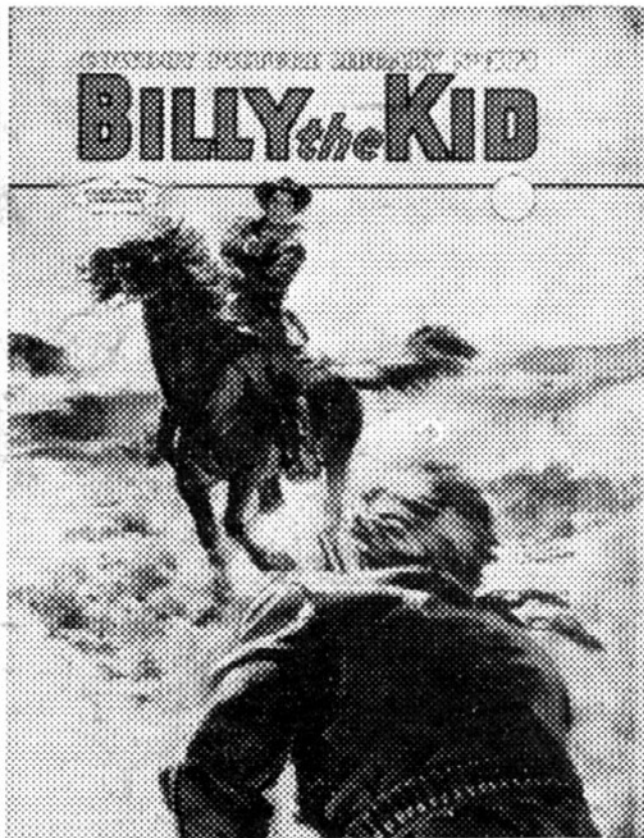


COWBOY PICTURE LIBRARY

On Sale MONDAY, 19th SEPTEMBER



Cowboy Picture Library No. 369 KIT CARSON. For high adventure, thrills and action, read the exciting stories of the famous frontier scout.



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COWBOY PICTURE LIBRARY is on sale the
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DO NOT MISS THEM !

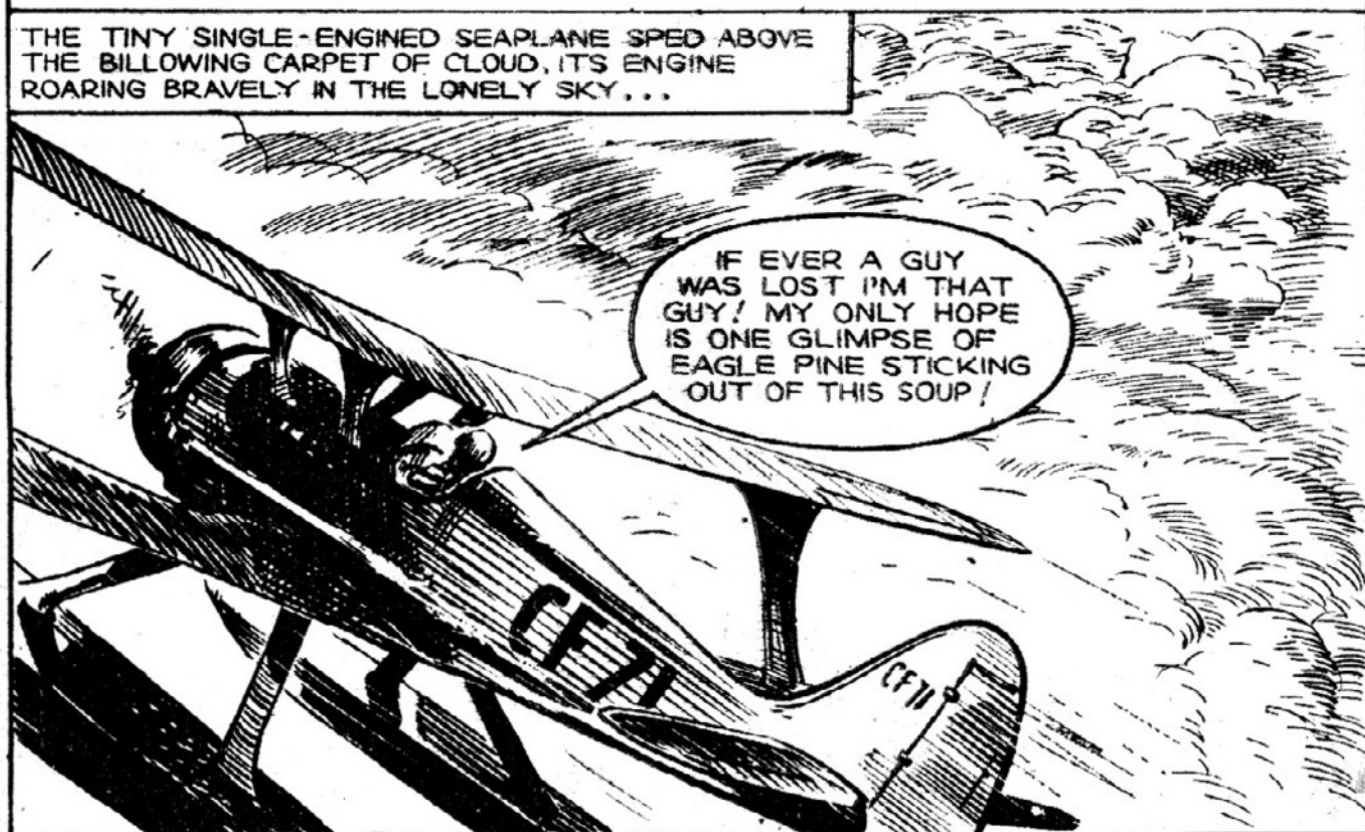
Breaking Point



MEN CAME FROM THE FARTHEST OUTPOSTS OF THE EMPIRE TO FLY AND FIGHT WITH THE ROYAL AIR FORCE. MEN FROM EVERY WALK OF LIFE -- HUNTERS, GOLD-MINERS, SAILORS, EXPLORERS AND MEN WHO FLEW AGAINST THE HAZARDS OF NATURE... THE BUSH PILOTS. BRAD LEWIS WAS ONE OF THESE...

Chapter 1 BUSH PILOT

THE TINY SINGLE-ENGINE SEAPLANE SPED ABOVE THE BILLLOWING CARPET OF CLOUD, ITS ENGINE ROARING BRAVELY IN THE LONELY SKY...



IF EVER A GUY WAS LOST I'M THAT GUY! MY ONLY HOPE IS ONE GLIMPSE OF EAGLE PINE STICKING OUT OF THIS SOUP!

BRAD WAS OVERDUE AT LAKE ARAUWA IN THE CANADIAN BACKWOODS, AND THE CLOUD WAS TEN TENTHS!

HE AIN'T GOT A SNOWBALL'S CHANCE IN A FURNACE, HANK! AN HOUR LATE ALREADY AND THE MIST IS AS THICK AS EVER!



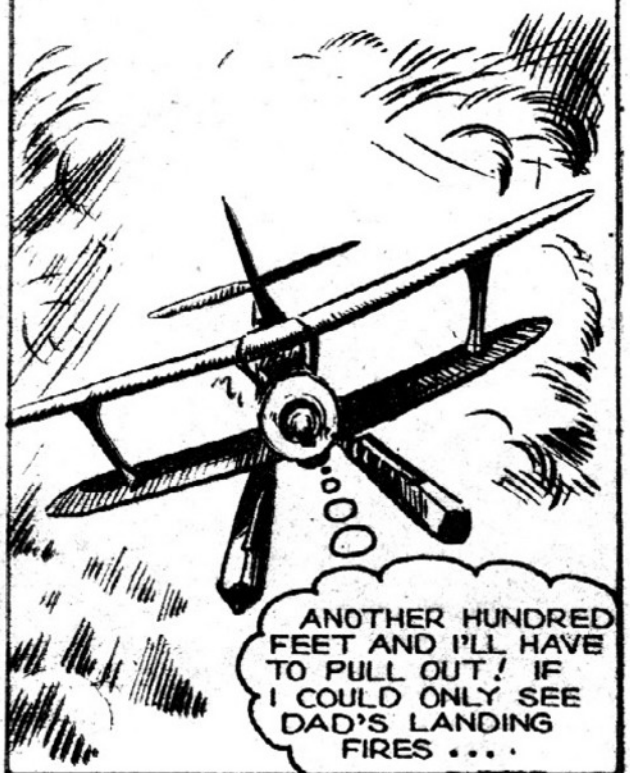
THAT BOY OF YOURS AIN'T NO FOOL! THE SEAT OF HIS PANTS'LL BRING HIM DOWN! SHH... LISTEN! AIN'T THAT HIM NOW?

FOR AN HOUR BRAD HAD BEEN FLYING ON INSTINCT. THE FIRST MISTS OF WINTER HAD OBLITERATED ALL LANDMARKS -- ALL EXCEPT EAGLE PINE, A TWO HUNDRED FOOT TREE.



BY GOLLY, THAT'S OLD EAGLE PINE -- OR I'M A RED INDIAN! WELL, HERE WE GO -- COURSE O-SEVEN-O! LET'S HOPE THE WIND'S OKAY!

WITH ONLY A TREE TOP AS A PINPOINT AND A FLYING INSTINCT SECOND TO NONE, BRAD STARTED THE DESCENT THROUGH CLOUD.



ANOTHER HUNDRED FEET AND I'LL HAVE TO PULL OUT! IF I COULD ONLY SEE DAD'S LANDING FIRES . . .

THROUGH THE CLOYING MIST A FAINT GLOW APPEARED -- A BLAZING, KEROSENE-SOAKED PILE OF PINE BRANCHES -- THE FLARE PATH!



GOOD OLD DAD! THAT SURE WAS THE NEAREST THING TO BEIN' REALLY LOST!

THERE HE IS, HARRY! THAT BOY OF YOURS SURE DON'T MISS A TRICK!

YEP! I RECKON BRAD'LL SHOW THOSE ENGLISH PILOTS A THING OR TWO!

Breaking Point

FOR BRAD, THIS WAS HIS LAST TRIP AS A BUSH PILOT BEFORE HE SET OUT FOR QUEBEC -- AND THEN LONDON -- TO JOIN THE ROYAL AIR FORCE.



I MADE IT, PA! NOW YOU CAN PUT THE OLD CRATE IN COLD STORAGE TILL I GET BACK FROM BRITAIN!

YOU'RE DARN RIGHT YOU MADE IT -- BUT ONLY JUST!

THAT NIGHT, BRAD PACKED HIS GEAR FOR HIS JOURNEY TO THE "OLD COUNTRY", WHICH WAS NOW IN NEED OF EVERY EXPERIENCED PILOT IN THE BUSINESS ...



WHEN YOU'RE PACKED, SON, YOU HIT THE HAY! YOU'VE GOT A WAY TO GO TOMORROW!

SURE, DAD!

IT TOOK TWO ARDUOUS DAYS OF RIVER TRAVEL TO REACH THE RAIL-HEAD.



IF WE TURN OVER IN THIS, I'LL MISS THE FREIGHT TRAIN! I'LL HAVE A WEEK TO WAIT FOR THE NEXT ONE!

DON'T YOU WORRY, SON, I'LL SEE YOU CATCH THE TRAIN!

IT WAS A WISTFUL OLD MAN WHO WATCHED THE TRAIN MOVE OUT ACROSS THE PRAIRIE. AN OLD MAN WHO HAD HEARD THE BUGLES OF WAR BLOWING BEFORE. OLD HANK, TOO, COULD REMEMBER THE GREAT URGE THAT WAS TAKING BRAD FOUR THOUSAND MILES -- TO THE FIGHT ...



THERE GOES A GOOD LAD, MOUNTIE! HE'LL SHOW THOSE FELLERS IN BRITAIN HOW TO SHOOT DOWN GERMANS!

MAYBE, OLD-TIMER -- MAYBE! BUT I BET A DOLLAR TO A DIME THAT THEY'LL HAVE TO TEACH YOUNG BRAD A FEW THINGS FIRST!

THREE WEEKS LATER, ON A COLD, BLACKED-OUT NOVEMBER EVENING, BRAD LEWIS REACHED LONDON. NO ONE HAD A MOMENT TO SPARE FOR THE TALL YOUNG CANADIAN AS HE STEPPED OFF THE BOAT TRAIN ...

SAY, SOLDIER! HOW DO I REACH THE AIR MINISTRY-- I HEAR THEY WANT PILOTS! I WANT TO JOIN!

YARK AT HIM! KEEN TYPE!



WELL, IT'S ONLY MIDNIGHT, CHUM, BUT I DARESAY YOU'LL FIND LORD TRENCHARD STILL THERE! REMEMBER ME TO HIM!

THE CHILLING SARCASM OF THE TWO SERVICE POLICEMEN DID NOT DAMPEN BRAD'S FIGHTING SPIRIT. NEXT MORNING, AS THE DOORS OF THE AIR MINISTRY OPENED ...

WELL, WELL, WELL! WE'VE GOT A CUSTOMER!

HIYA, SARGE! I'M BRAD LEWIS-- I HEAR YOU WANT SOME PILOTS!



COME RIGHT IN, COWBOY!

Breaking Point

BRITAIN DID NEED FIGHTING MEN -- ESPECIALLY MEN WHO COULD FLY A PLANE. BRAD LEWIS SOON FOUND HIMSELF BEING PUT THROUGH THE STRINGENT TESTS DESIGNED TO PICK OUT ONLY THOSE WHO WERE LIKELY TO MAKE AIRCREW...



TWO DAYS LATER, HE WAS INTERVIEWED BY AN ELDERLY GROUP CAPTAIN. THE OFFICER SEEMED TO BE IMPRESSED BY THE NUMBER OF FLYING HOURS TO THE BUSH PILOT'S CREDIT -- BUT ...

YOU WILL FIND, LEWIS, THAT YOU'LL HAVE TO UNLEARN ALL YOU KNOW ABOUT FLYING AND LEARN TO FLY THE ROYAL AIR FORCE WAY! YOU WON'T FIND THIS EASY, BUT YOU LOOK THE SORT OF CHAP WHO MIGHT DO, SO I'M LETTING YOU TAKE A PILOT'S COURSE!



THE CANADIAN WAS STAGGERED THAT HIS OFFER TO JOIN THE R.A.F. WAS RECEIVED SO COOLLY. AFTER ALL, HE **WAS** AN EXPERIENCED PILOT ...



BRAD'S QUESTION WAS SOON TO BE ANSWERED. THE TRAIN PULLED IN AT A CORNISH SEASIDE TOWN AND THE NEW CADETS WERE ORDERED OUT ON TO THE PLATFORM.



EVERYTHING SEEMED TO GO QUIET WHILE THE FLIGHT SERGEANT ABSORBED BRAD'S WORDS ...



Breaking Point

BRAD LEWIS DID NOT ENJOY THE NEXT FEW WEEKS. MORSE CODE, ARMAMENT, NAVIGATION, MATHEMATICS -- ALL THESE HAD TO BE LEARNED THOROUGHLY. INTERVALS BETWEEN LECTURES WERE SPENT EITHER AT P.T. OR ON THE BARRACK SQUARE



BUT BRAD HAD BEEN PUSHED TOO FAR! AS SOON AS THEY WERE DISMISSED THAT AFTERNOON, HE MARCHED UP TO THE FLIGHT SERGEANT ...



AGAIN A SILENCE FELL, WHILE THE FLIGHT SERGEANT STROVE TO REGAIN HIS POWERS OF SPEECH. WHEN AT LENGTH HE SPOKE IT WAS THROUGH CLENCHED TEETH ...

IF ANYONE ELSE'D SAID THAT TO ME, LEWIS, HE'D HAVE BEEN IN THE GUARD ROOM BY NOW! BUT WITH YOU, WE'LL HAVE TO TRY THE SPECIAL TREATMENT! REPORT TO THE GYM IN FIVE MINUTES! WE'LL SEE WHAT A ROUND OR TWO WITH THE GLOVES'LL DO FOR YOU!



THERE WAS LITTLE SYMPATHY FOR BRAD LEWIS FROM HIS FELLOW CADETS. EVERYONE RECKONED THE CANADIAN WAS A "LINE SHOOTER" AND SORELY IN NEED OF BEING TAKEN DOWN A PEG!



NEWS OF THE FIGHT HAD QUICKLY SPREAD AND THERE WAS QUITE A CROWD TO WATCH THE TWO MEN STEP FORWARD IN THE RING AND SHAKE HANDS ...



WE'LL SEE, FLIGHT SERGEANT, WE'LL SEE!

Breaking Point

BRAD FOLLOWED UP HIS WORDS WITH ACTION!



THE FLIGHT SERGEANT HIT THE CANVAS HARD. NO ONE COULD DENY THAT THE CANADIAN PACKED A HEFTY PUNCH.



THE FLIGHT SERGEANT WAS UP AT THE COUNT OF NINE. HE CIRCLED THE YOUNG CANADIAN WARILY.



BUT BRAD HAD UNDERRATED HIS OPPONENT. HE MADE THE MOST ELEMENTARY MISTAKE -- FOR A SECOND HE DROPPED HIS GUARD! LIKE LIGHTNING, THE FLIGHT SERGEANT SWUNG A RIGHT THAT THUDDED AGAINST THE POINT OF THE CANADIAN'S JAW ...

AARGH!



THE FIGHT WAS OVER. TRY AS HE MIGHT, BRAD COULD NOT BEAT THE COUNT OF TEN.

THERE'S A LESSON IN THIS FOR YOU, LEWIS! THAT PUNCH YOU GAVE ME WAS A GOOD ONE BUT IT WASN'T GOOD ENOUGH! YOU MAY BE A GOOD PILOT, BUT I BET YOU'RE NOT GOOD ENOUGH!

WE'LL SEE ABOUT THAT!



Breaking Point

THE FLIGHT SERGEANT'S WORDS STUCK IN BRAD'S GULLET. NOT GOOD ENOUGH! HE STRODE BACK TO HIS BILLET FUMING...

IT'S A PITY! HE'S GOT SPIRIT, THAT LAD, BUT THERE'S ONE THING HE'S GOT TO LEARN AND IT'S SOMETHING HE'S GOT TO LEARN THE HARD WAY!

WHAT'S THAT, FLIGHT SERGEANT?

DISCIPLINE, SIR!

AIRMAN'S QUARTERS



Chapter 2

REPRIEVE

THE LONG, FRUSTRATING COURSE OF GROUND INSTRUCTION ENDED AT LAST. BRAD LEWIS AND HIS FELLOW CADETS WERE POSTED TO THEIR E.F.T.S. -- ELEMENTARY FLYING TRAINING SCHOOL...



DESPITE HIS ATTITUDE OF SUPERIORITY, BRAD FELT BETTER. HERE WERE AEROPLANES -- SURELY HE COULD SHOW THEM IN FIVE MINUTES THAT HE COULD FLY THE PANTS OFF ANYONE ON THE STATION?



Breaking Point

WING COMMANDER MAITLAND GAZED THOUGHTFULLY AT THE EAGER FACES ON THE NEW TRAINING COURSE. HOW MANY OF THEM WOULD MAKE THE GRADE?

YOU ALL LOOK KEEN! YOU'LL NEED TO BE! THIS IS GOING TO BE A TOUGH COURSE AND SOME OF YOU WILL FAIL! SOME OF YOU MAY HAVE FLOWN BEFORE -- TO YOU I SAY, "FORGET IT! WE'RE GOING TO TEACH YOU ALL OVER AGAIN -- THE R.A.F. WAY!"



HERE WE GO AGAIN!

AS THEY LEFT THE "OPS" ROOM, BRAD'S INDIGNATION BOILED OVER. HE RAISED HIS VOICE COMPLAININGLY...

IT'S ALWAYS THE SAME -- WE'LL TEACH YOU THE R.A.F. WAY! WHAT WAY IS *THAT*, FOR LANDS SAKE? YOU FLY, OR YOU DON'T FLY!

QUIET, YOU CLOT!

WILL THAT TALL CANADIAN CADET PLEASE REMAIN BEHIND!



HE'S DONE IT AGAIN!



Breaking Point

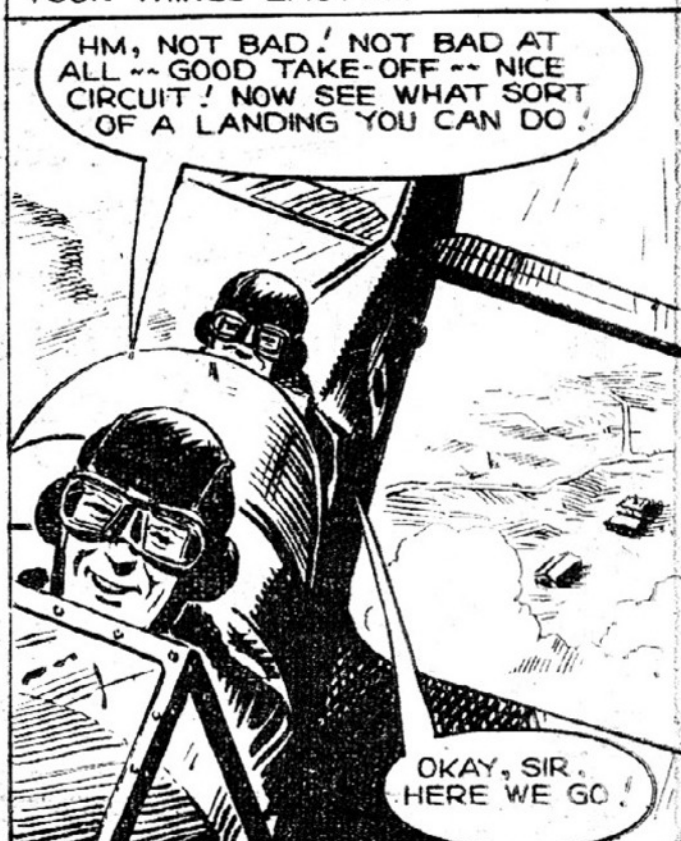
THE HEARTS OF THE OTHER FIVE CADETS BEAT A LITTLE FASTER AS THEY WERE INTRODUCED TO THEIR FIRST AEROPLANE, BUT BRAD ASSUMED AN AIR OF EASY NONCHALANCE.



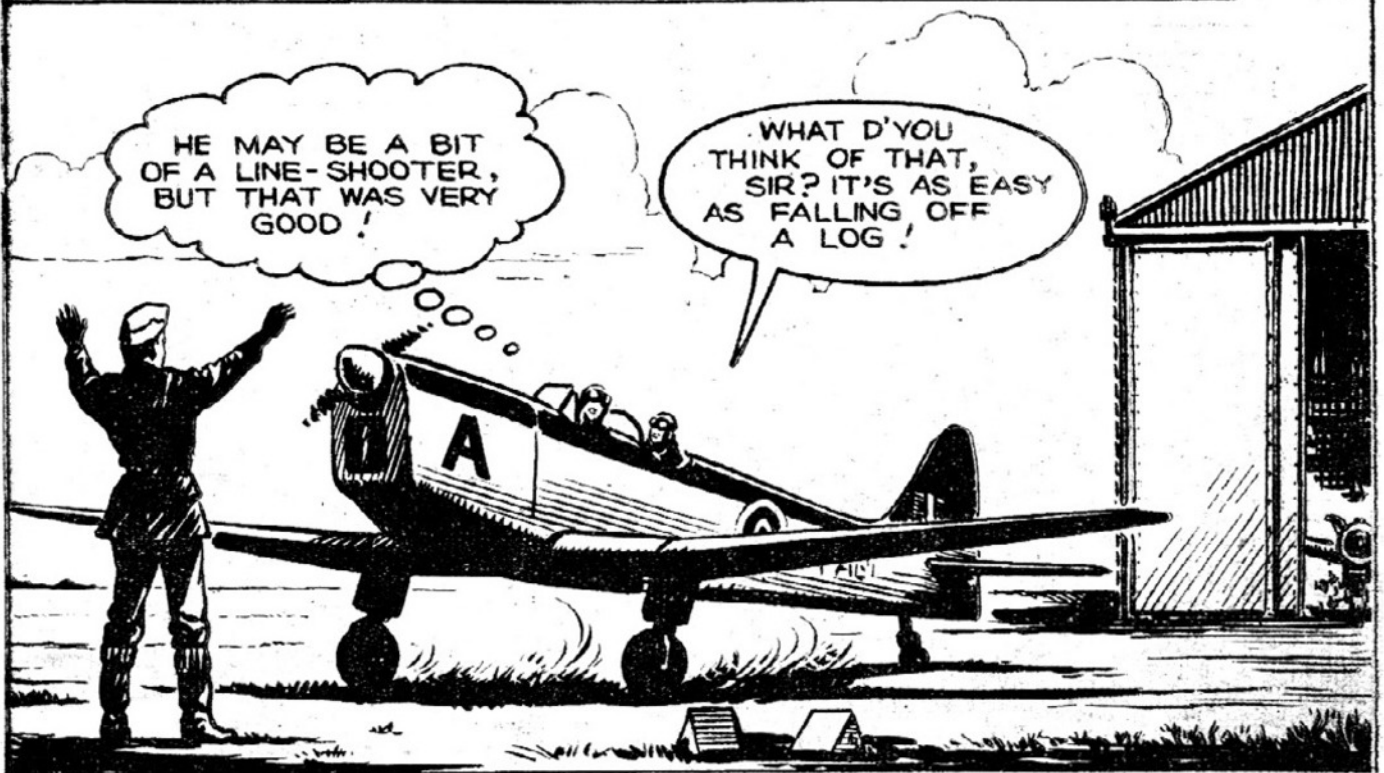
BEFORE STARTING FLYING TUITION, AN INSTRUCTOR TOOK EACH OF HIS PUPILS FOR A TRIAL TRIP. TO ALL CADETS THIS WAS A GREAT MOMENT. TO BRAD, HOWEVER, IT WAS A GREAT MOMENT FOR ANOTHER REASON...



THEY TAXIED OUT TO TAKE-OFF POINT. THE CANADIAN HAD A SUDDEN URGE TO DO A DASHING TAKE-OFF BUT HE WAS NOT A COMPLETE FOOL. HE TOOK THINGS EASY...

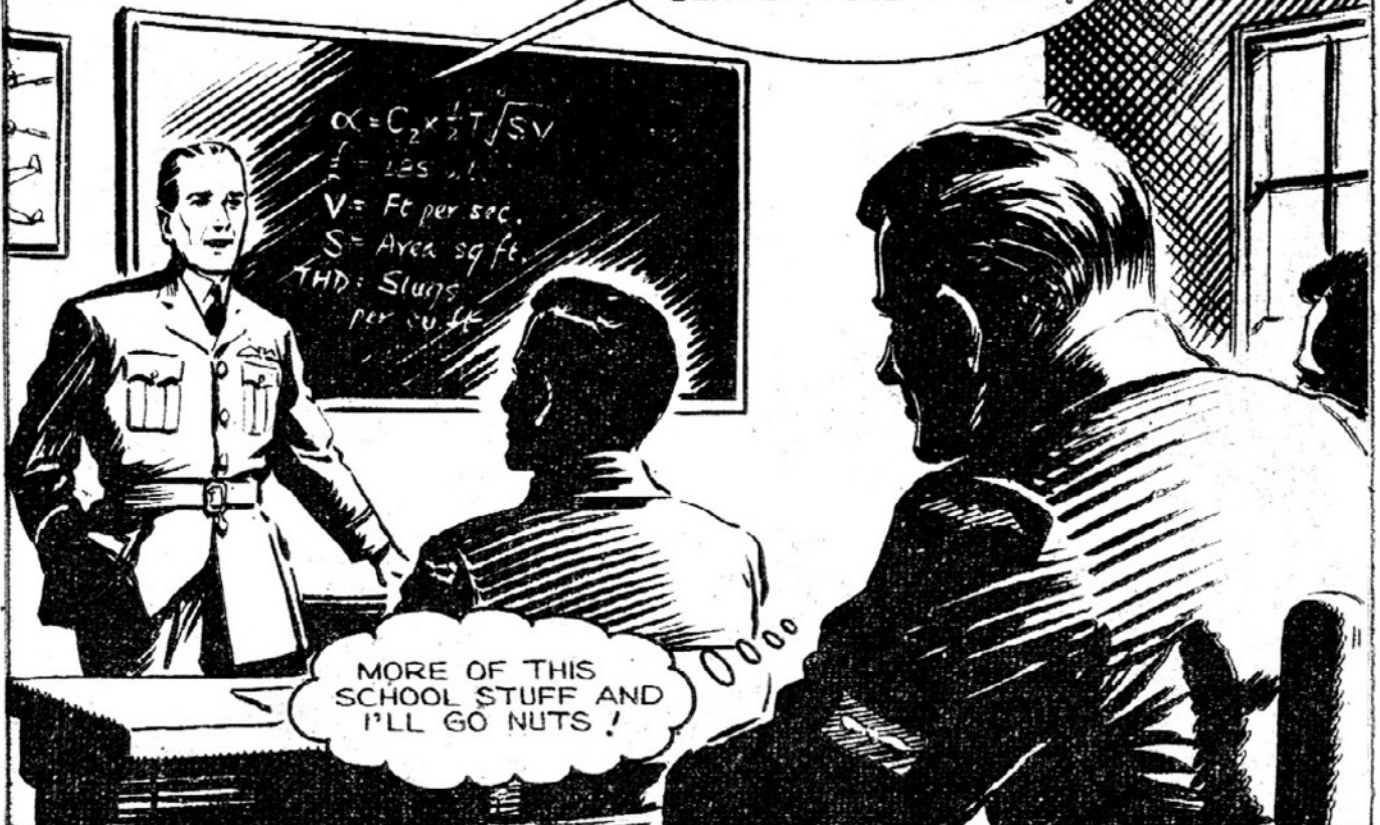


BRAD LEWIS WAS FLYING SUPERBLY. FLYING OFFICER MARSH AT ONCE REALISED THAT THE CANADIAN WAS A BORN PILOT!



FOR SEVERAL DAYS BEFORE FLYING INSTRUCTION STARTED, THE CADETS HAD THE THEORY OF FLYING DINNED INTO THEM...

... SO YOU SEE, ON TAKE-OFF YOU START WITH THE STICK FORWARD AND THEN, WHEN YOU REACH FLYING SPEED, YOU GENTLY PULL IT BACK!



Breaking Point

BRAD LEWIS, ALONG WITH HIS FELLOW CADETS, WAS BEING CAREFULLY WATCHED. EVERY FAULT, EVERY VIRTUE, WOULD COUNT WHEN IT CAME TO THE FINAL SUMMING UP!

HOW DO YOU FIND THIS CANADIAN CHAP, LEWIS? DO YOU THINK HE'LL DO?

AS A PILOT, SIR, HE'S FIRST CLASS! BUT AS R.A.F. AIRCREW-- WELL, I JUST DON'T KNOW! HE'S CERTAINLY A TOUGH NUT! HE'S GOING SOLO THIS AFTERNOON!



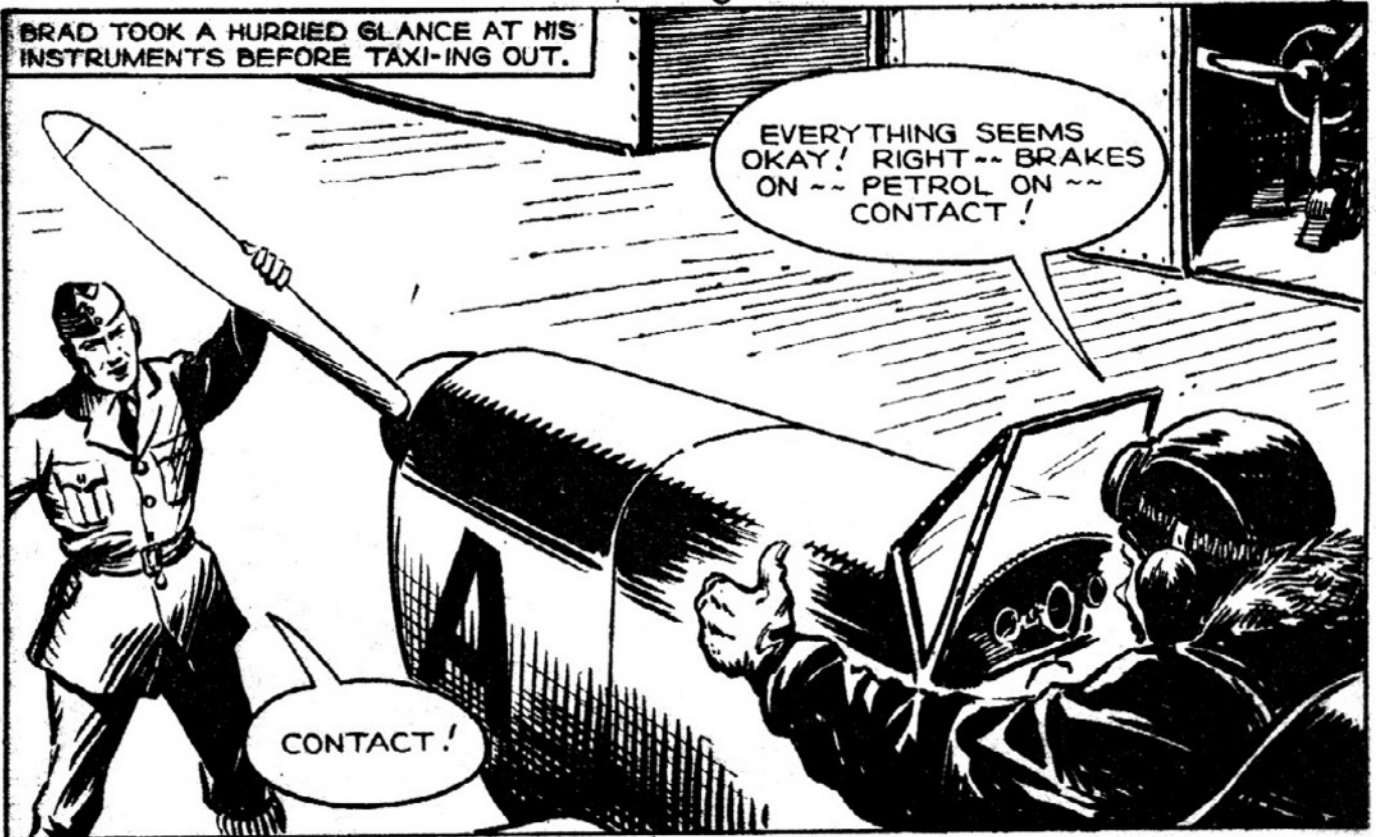
THAT AFTERNOON, WING COMMANDER MAITLAND AND THE INSTRUCTOR WATCHED BRAD SWAGGER OUT TO THE LITTLE TRAINING AIRCRAFT.

THERE HE GOES -- ALL THE CONFIDENCE IN THE WORLD!

YES, IT'S HIGH TIME HE WAS SHAKEN! LET'S HOPE IT HAPPENS TO HIM IN TIME TO MAKE A RESPONSIBLE PILOT OUT OF HIM!



BRAD TOOK A HURRIED GLANCE AT HIS INSTRUMENTS BEFORE TAXI-ING OUT.

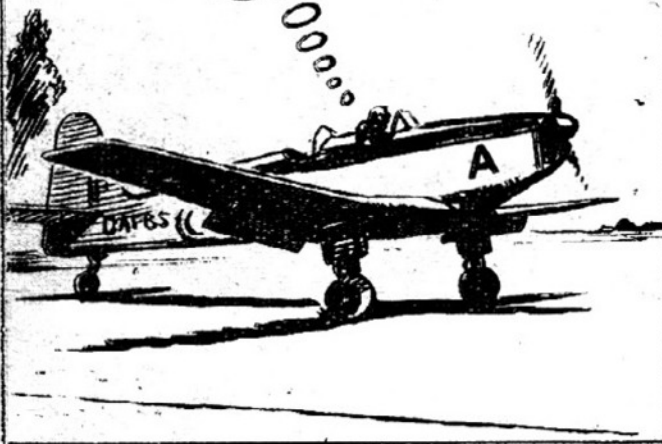


FULL OF HIGH SPIRITS, HE FLUNG A PARTING BOAST AT HIS FELLOW CADETS ...



THEN HE NEGLECTED TO OBEY THE MOST FUNDAMENTAL RULE OF FLYING WHICH IS, "DO YOUR COCKPIT DRILL IF YOU WANT TO KEEP FLYING". BRAD WAS TOO KEEN TO BE AIRBORNE -- TOO KEEN TO CHECK HIS FLAPS ...

ALL CORRECT,
I RECKON! RIGHT--
THROTTLE OPEN!
LET'S GO!



GREAT SCOTT!
THE YOUNG FOOL
HASN'T CHECKED
HIS FLAPS -- **HE'LL
NEVER GET OFF
THE DECK!**

CALL
THE CRASH
WAGON!

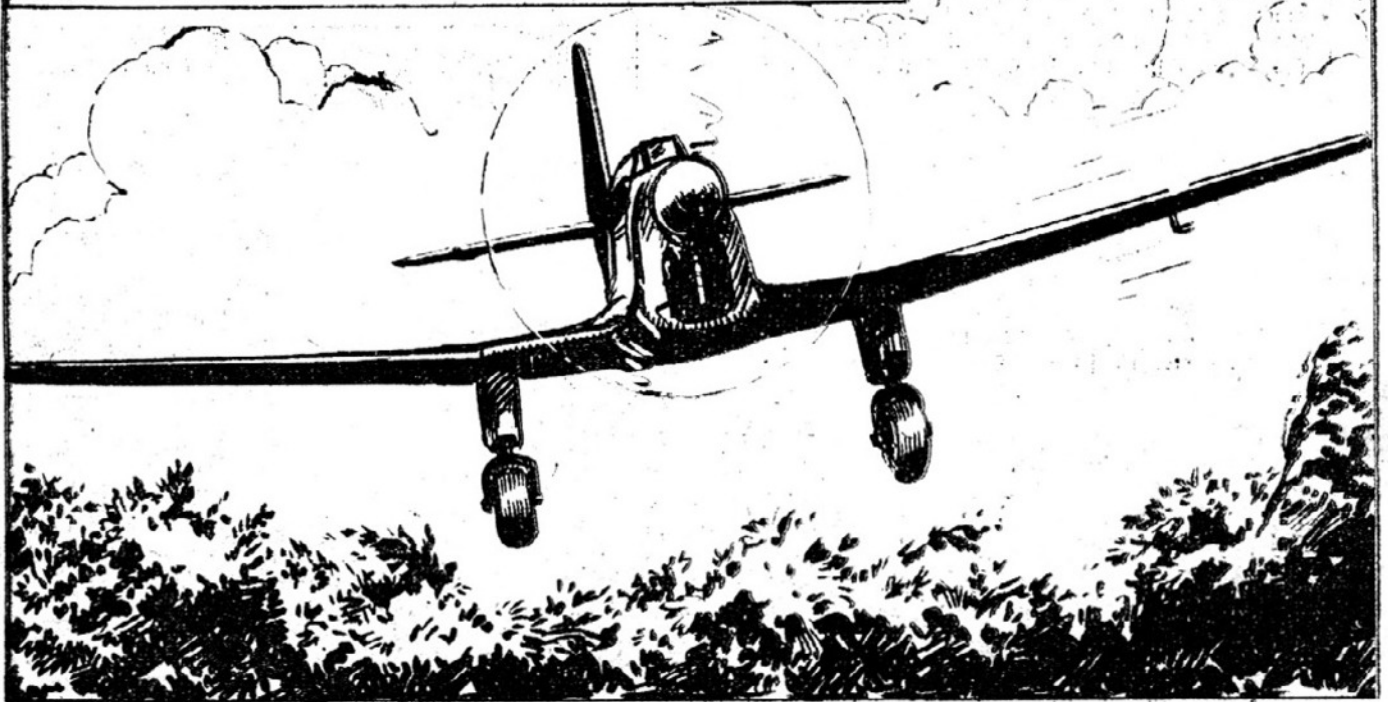


THE END OF THE RUNWAY
HURTLED TOWARDS BRAD ...

BY CRACKY!
SHE WON'T MAKE
IT! WHAT ...
THE FLAPS!



WITH A QUICK JERK OF HIS WRIST, BRAD FLICKED OVER THE FLAP CONTROL, WRENCHED THE STICK BACK, AND AT THE SAME TIME RAMMED THE THROTTLE FORWARD...



EVERYONE ON THE AIRFIELD STOOD ROOTED TO THE SPOT IN HORROR. BRAD LEWIS WAS CERTAINLY "SHOWING" THEM...



BRAD CLIMBED STEEPLY TO FIVE THOUSAND FEET. IT WAS A WARM DAY, THE ENGINE WAS HUMMING STEADILY ~ AND IT WAS GOOD TO BE ALIVE! A LITTLE TOWN LAY BENEATH HIM ..



THE TOWN WAS BY NO MEANS SLEEPY ~ IT WAS MARKET DAY! IN A FEW ROARING SECONDS, THE HIGH STREET BECAME A SCENE OF CHAOS ...



LEAVING A SEVERELY STARTLED HIGH STREET BEHIND HIM, HE ZOOMED UP AGAIN... BRAD WAS HAVING FUN!



AIR VICE-MARSHAL BEAKER WAS SLEEPING OFF A GOOD LUNCH! HE'D HAD A TRYING MORNING AND THE GENTLE HUM OF THE CAR LULLED HIM INTO DEEPER AND DEEPER SLEEP ~~ **SUDDENLY** ...



Breaking Point

THE AIR VICE-MARSHAL'S FACE WAS PURPLE WITH RAGE AS HE CRAWLED OUT OF THE WRECKED CAR...

THE YOUNG FOOL WHO DID THAT IS GOING TO WISH HE'D NEVER BEEN BORN! GET TO THE NEAREST TELEPHONE, JENKINS! THERE SHOULD BE AN R.A.F. STATION NEAR HERE-- TELL THEM TO SEND TRANSPORT!

YESSIR!

AND TELL 'EM TO HURRY!

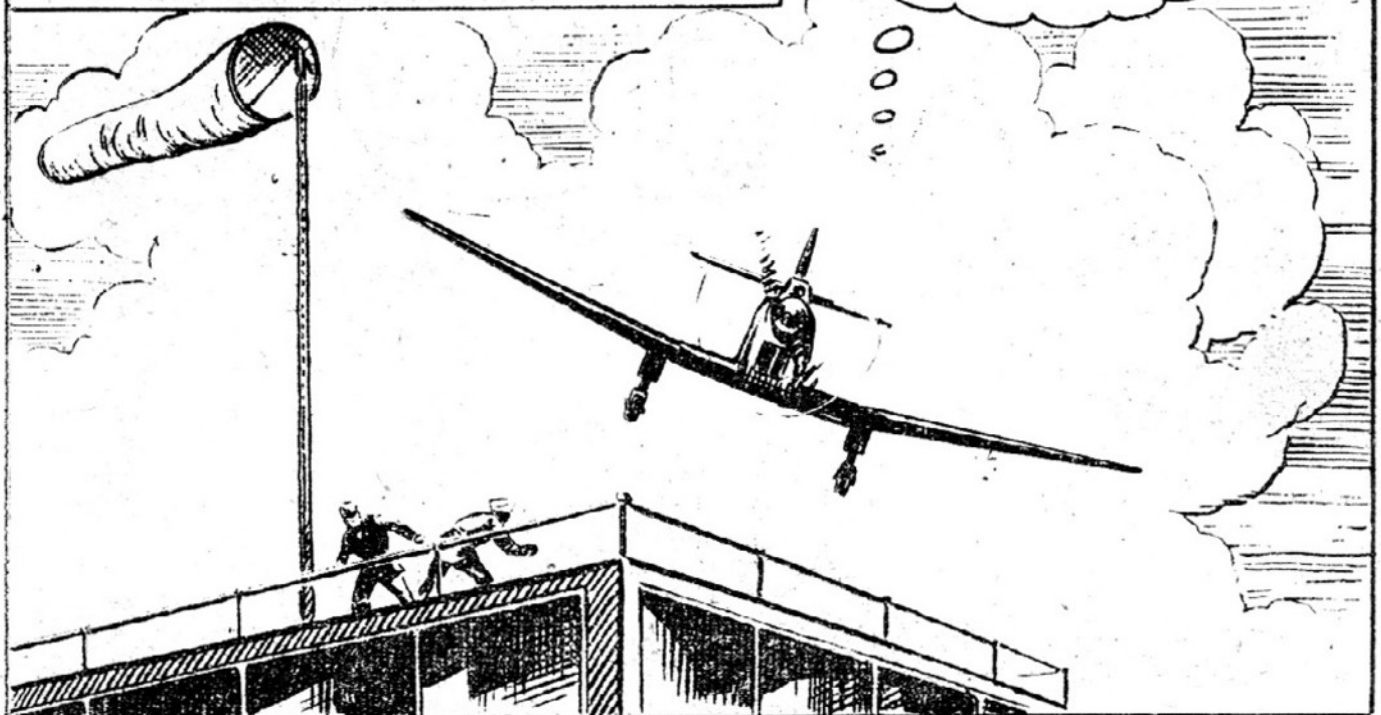
BY THAT TIME, BRAD WAS BACK OVER THE AERODROME. HE SAW THE CLUSTER OF CADETS NEAR THE FLYING CONTROL TOWER AND THREW COMMON SENSE TO THE WINDS...

MIND YOUR HEADS, BOYS-- I'M COMING DOWN...

FLIGHT LIEUTENANT MARSH WAS RELIEVED TO SEE HIS HARE-BRAINED PUPIL ON THE WAY HOME. BUT HIS RELIEF SOON CHANGED TO DISMAY...



BRAD LEWIS HAD YET TO LEARN THAT LOW-FLYING WAS ONE OF THE GREATEST CRIMES AN R.A.F. PILOT COULD COMMIT! HE WAS HAVING FUN. HE THOUGHT THAT THIS DISPLAY WOULD HAVE HIM POSTED TO A FIGHTER SQUADRON RIGHT AWAY...



THE C.O. LISTENED WITH HORROR TO THE AIR VICE-MARSHAL'S DRIVER. HE PICTURED THE ANGRY AIR OFFICER THIRSTING FOR BLOOD BY HIS WRECKED CAR! BUT THAT WAS NOT ALL ...



IT TOOK TWO HOURS TO PACIFY THE AIR VICE-MARSHAL AND PERSUADE THE SUPERINTENDENT OF POLICE NOT TO PREFER CHARGES! THE C.O. WAS A VERY ANGRY MAN WHEN AT LAST BRAD LEWIS ANSWERED HIS SUMMONS.



A HURRICANE WAS KEPT ON THE STATION FOR THE C.O.'S USE. HE DECIDED TO LOSE HIS ILL-HUMOUR WITH HALF AN HOUR'S AEROBATICS. HE RANG UP THE SERGEANT FITTER.



BRAD STUMBLED OUT OF THE C.O.'S OFFICE A THOROUGHLY SHAKEN MAN! HIS DREAMS AND AMBITIONS HAD IN A FEW MINUTES BEEN COMPLETELY SHATTERED. HE WALKED AIMLESSLY ACROSS THE AIRFIELD HIS SPIRITS AT ZERO. FLIGHT LIEUTENANT MARSH WAS SORRY FOR HIS PUPIL AND FOLLOWED HIM OUT...

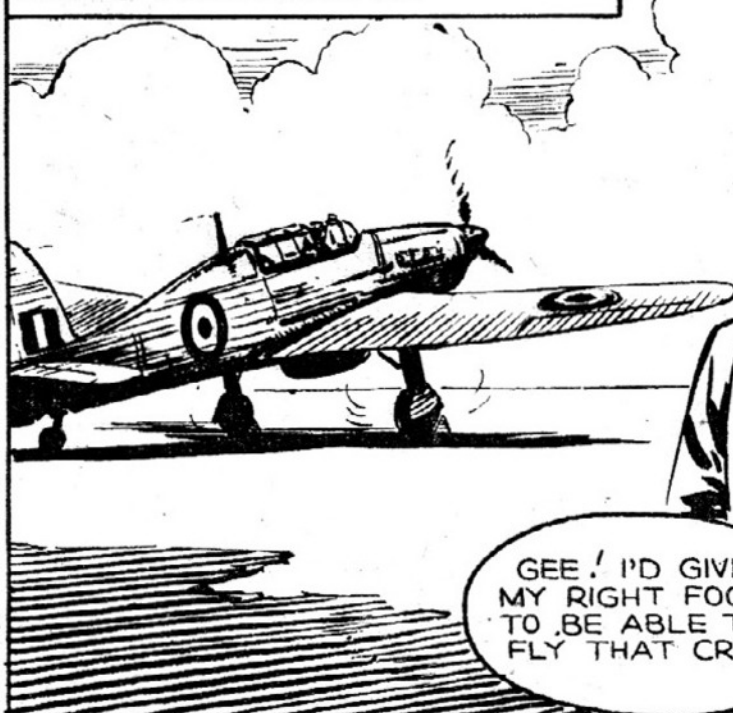
YOU ASKED FOR IT, YOU KNOW! LOW FLYING IS A BIG BLACK IN THE R.A.F.! I'LL SEE THE C.O. TOMORROW AND SEE IF HE WON'T RECONSIDER HIS DECISION!

AW HECK! IT'S NO GOOD, SIR! HE WAS REAL MAD AT ME-- I GUESS I'VE HAD IT!



A THROATY, RUMBLING ROAR INTERRUPTED THEIR CONVERSATION. WING COMMANDER MAITLAND WAS RUNNING UP THE ENGINE OF HIS HURRICANE BEFORE TAKE-OFF. ENVIOUSLY BRAD WATCHED THE GREAT HAWK-LIKE AIRCRAFT POISED FOR FLIGHT...

THERE'S THE C.O. NOW! HE'LL FEEL BETTER AFTER HALF AN HOUR'S FLYING!



GEE! I'D GIVE MY RIGHT FOOT TO BE ABLE TO FLY THAT CRATE!



WITH A COUGHING ROAR THE HURRICANE STREAKED INTO ITS TAKE-OFF RUN ...

THAT'S FUNNY-- THAT ENGINE DOESN'T SEEM TO BE RUNNING VERY SMOOTHLY ...



LOOK! THERE'S A STREAM OF SMOKE FROM THE ENGINE!

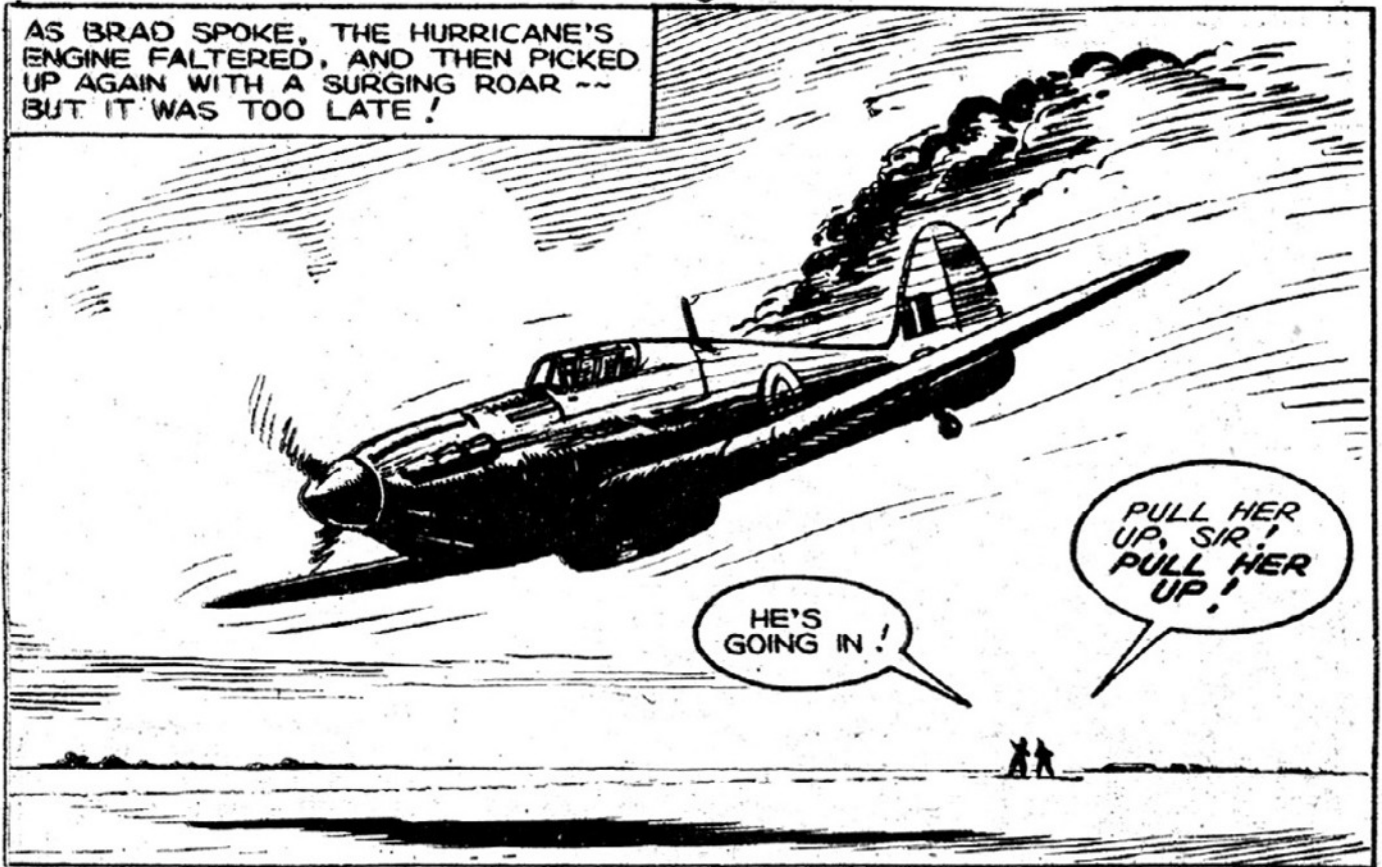
BY THE TIME THE C.O. REALISED THAT HE HAD ENGINE TROUBLE, IT WAS TOO LATE TO STOP. HE DECIDED TO GET AIRBORNE AND THEN BRING HER STRAIGHT IN TO LAND ...

WHEW, HE'S OFF THE DECK ANYWAY!

YES, BUT ...



AS BRAD SPOKE, THE HURRICANE'S ENGINE FALTERED, AND THEN PICKED UP AGAIN WITH A SURGING ROAR -- BUT IT WAS TOO LATE!



THE TWO MEN RACED TOWARDS THE CRASH. MARSH, IN HIS FRANTIC HASTE, TRIPPED...



Breaking Point

SMOKE AND VAPOUR WERE BILLING OUT OF THE TWISTED ENGINE COWLING ~ ANY SECOND, THE PLANE MIGHT BURST INTO FLAME. THERE WAS NO SIGN OF MOVEMENT INSIDE THE COCKPIT ...



SWEATING AND STRUGGLING IN THE OVERPOWERING FUMES, THE YOUNG CANADIAN HEAVED THE INJURED MAN ON TO HIS SHOULDERS ...



THE CLANG OF BELLS HERALDED THE APPROACH OF A CRASH TENDER, BUT BEFORE IT COULD REACH THE SPOT, THE HURRICANE'S TANKS EXPLODED.



WHEN ALL WAS SORTED OUT, THE C.O. HAD BROKEN HIS LEG, BRAD LEWIS HAD RECEIVED A FEW MINOR BURNS, AND MARSH A SPRAINED ANKLE.



FLIGHT LIEUTENANT MARSH MADE A POINT OF SEEING BRAD LEWIS BEFORE HE LEFT FOR HIS ADVANCED FLYING TRAINING ...



Chapter 3

FIGHTER FIASCO

ALTHOUGH BRAD STILL THOUGHT THAT TRAINING FOR HIM WAS A WASTE OF TIME, HE HAD LEARNT ENOUGH TO REALISE THAT IF EVER HE WAS TO FLY AND FIGHT, HE MUST FIRST COMPLETE HIS TRAINING COURSE.



THE CANADIAN'S GOOD BEHAVIOUR AND HIS BORN FLYING SKILL EARNED HIM A COMMISSION. HE WAS BUBBLING OVER WITH HIS NEW GLORY AS HE ARRIVED AT HIS NEW SQUADRON...



HALF AN HOUR LATER, THE SQUADRON RETURNED. BRAD WATCHED THE PILOTS AS THEY WALKED PAST HIM AND HE COULD NOT KEEP THE GRIN OFF HIS FACE. THIS WAS THE REAL THING -- SOON HE WOULD BE SCRAMBLING WITH THEM AGAINST THE GERMANS.



Breaking Point

THAT AFTERNOON HE MET THE REDOUBTABLE C.O. OF 809 SQUADRON, W/COMDR. JOLYON FERRERS, D.S.O. AND BAR, D.F.C. AND TRIPLE BAR, A.F.C.!! A LEGENDARY FIGURE...

GLAD TO SEE YOU, LEWIS! WELL, THIS IS A GOOD SQUADRON -- HAPPY -- EFFICIENT -- KEEN! YOU'D BETTER FLY AS MY NUMBER TWO UNTIL YOU FIND YOUR LEGS. KEEP YOUR EYES AND EARS OPEN AND LEARN AS MUCH AS YOU CAN -- **AS FAST AS YOU CAN!**



THIS WAS RECOGNITION AT LAST -- FLYING AS THE C.O.'S NUMBER TWO! AT THE FLIGHT OFFICES HE FOUND THE PILOTS WAITING FOR THE URGENT ORDER TO SCRAMBLE! BENEATH THEIR OUTWARD CALM HE COULD SENSE THEIR TENSENESS. THEY ALMOST IGNORED THE YOUNG CANADIAN...

YOU WON'T BE WANTED TODAY FOR OPS! I'LL JUST INTRODUCE YOU TO THE BOYS, THEN I'LL TAKE YOU TO YOUR AEROPLANE!



THEY SURE LOOK A STUCK-UP BUNCH! THEY THINK I'M A ROOKY, DO THEY! I'LL SHOW 'EM!



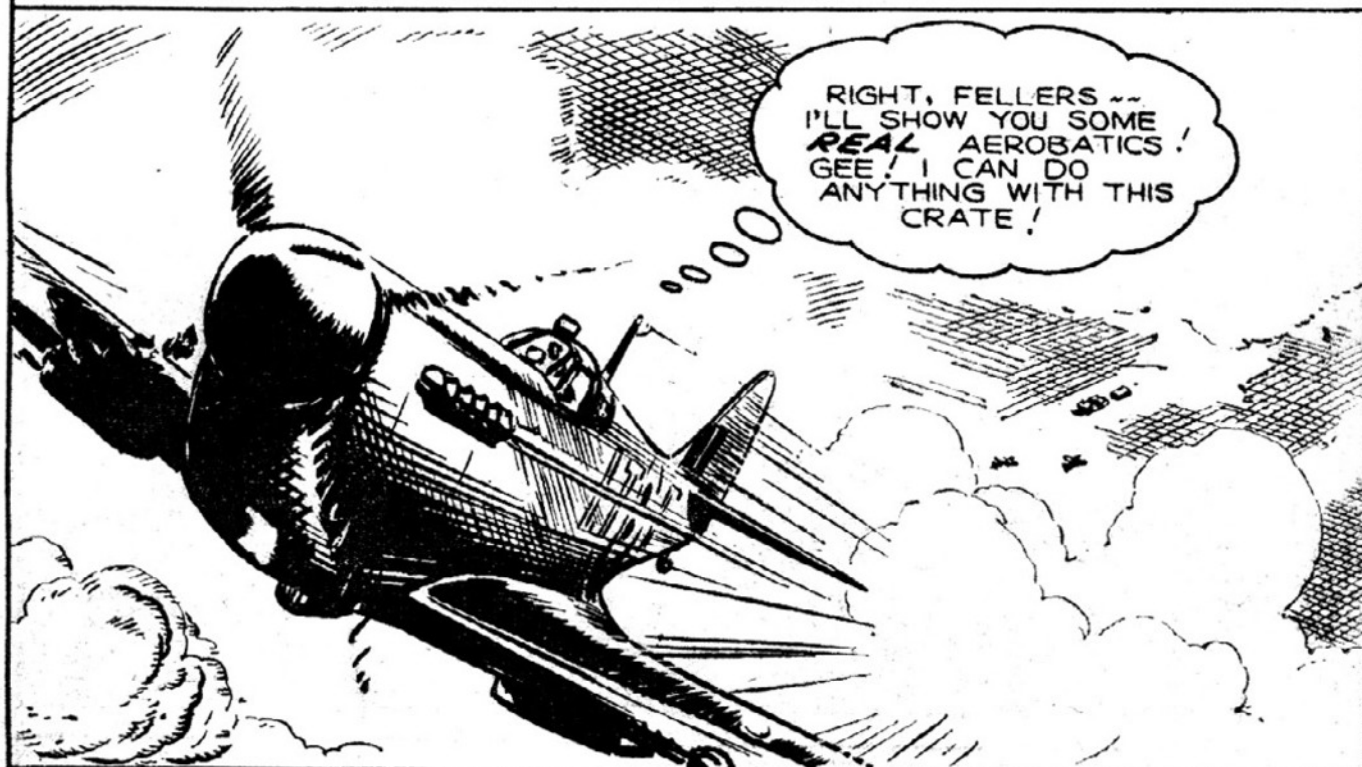
THE FLIGHT COMMANDER CAREFULLY REMINDED BRAD OF THE DETAILS OF THE SPITFIRE'S COCKPIT. THE SPITFIRE WAS A WONDERFUL AEROPLANE BUT IT WAS NOT EASY TO HANDLE ...

THE CANADIAN TAXIED TO THE TAKE-OFF POINT. HE CHECKED HIS COCKPIT -- EVERYTHING SEEMED TO BE IN ORDER.



Breaking Point

IN A FEW SECONDS BRAD LEVELLED OUT HIGH ABOVE THE AIRFIELD. HE TIPPED HIS PORT WING AND COULD SEE BLACK DOTS OUTSIDE THE FLIGHT OFFICES -- HE WAS BEING WATCHED ...



IN TEN TEMPESTUOUS MINUTES, BRAD CERTAINLY SHOWED HE COULD FLY -- BUT IT WAS NOT ENOUGH FOR HIM. HE WANTED TO FINISH WITH SOMETHING REALLY SPECTACULAR.

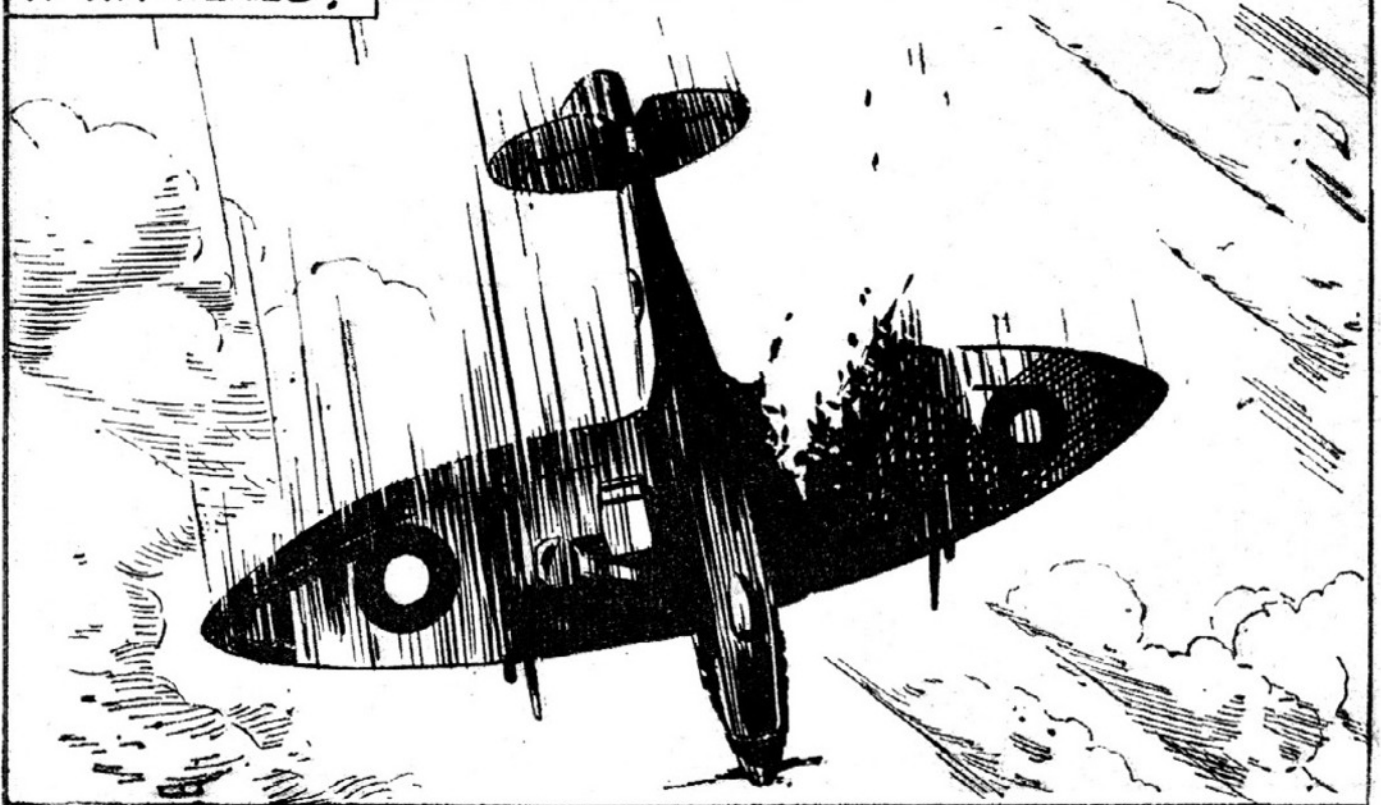


A "BUNT", OR OUTSIDE LOOP, IS ONE OF THE MOST DANGEROUS AEROBATICS IN THE BOOK. THE STRAIN ON THE AIRFRAME IS TREMENDOUS.

AT TWENTY THOUSAND FEET HE STARTED HIS DANGEROUS MANOEUVRE. IT WAS NOT LONG BEFORE THE PILOTS ON THE GROUND REALISED WHAT THE "NEW BOY" WAS GOING TO ATTEMPT.

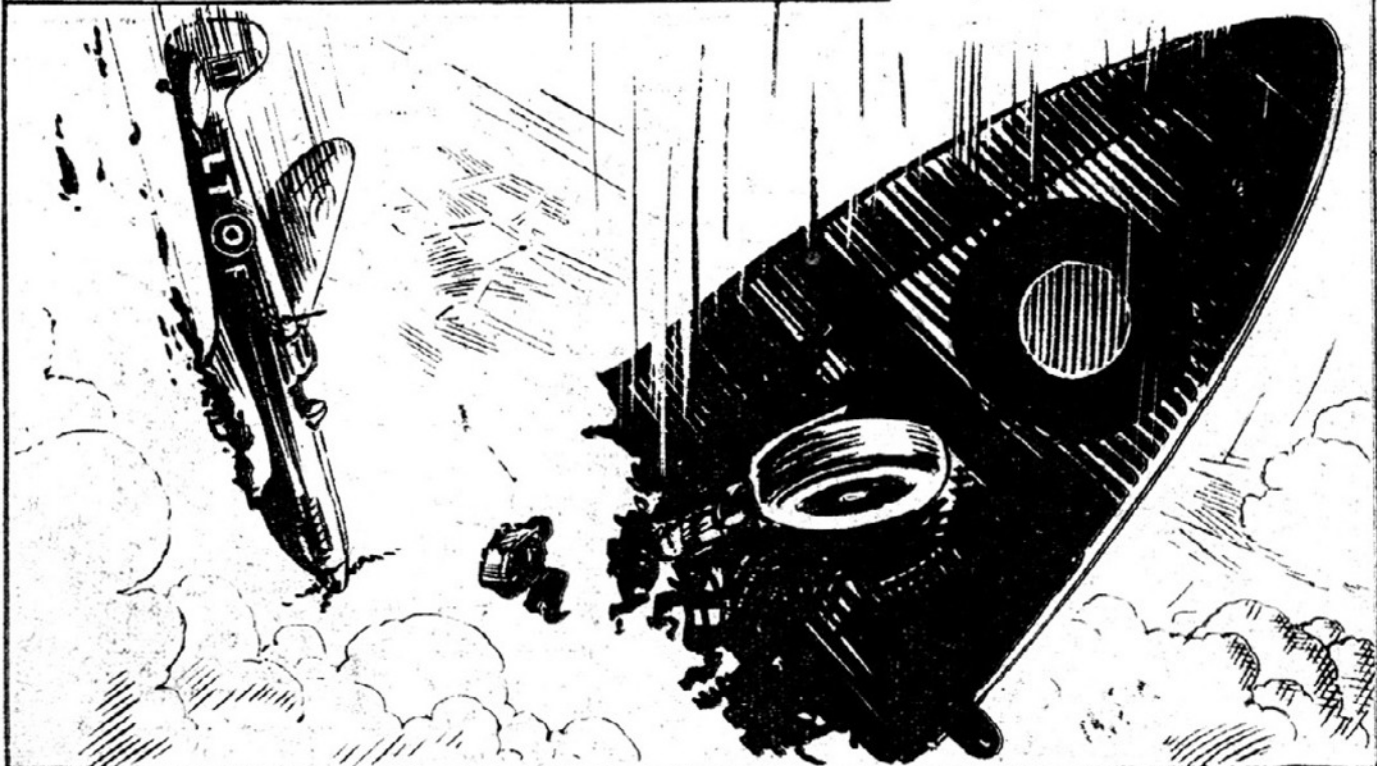


BEFORE HE WAS HALF WAY ROUND THE LOOP, BRAD LEWIS REALISED HIS MISTAKE. THE CENTRIFUGAL FORCE WAS TRYING TO FORCE HIM OUT OF HIS SEAT, AND THE PLANE WAS JUDDERING VIOLENTLY -- **AND THEN IT HAPPENED!**



Breaking Point

INSTANTLY BRAD COOLLY RELEASED HIS SAFETY HARNESS -- SLID BACK THE HATCH AND FELL OUT OF THE CARTWHEELING AIRCRAFT ...



AND AS HE DRIFTED EARTHWARDS, ALL BRAD'S WILD EXUBERATION VANISHED. EVEN HE REALISED HIS ACTION WAS LIABLE TO END HIS CAREER BEFORE IT HAD BEGUN.



AS HE WATCHED THE SQUADRON TAKE OFF, BRAD FELT VERY LOW. WOULD HE BE GROUNDED ~~ OR PERHAPS, EVEN, COURT-MARTIALLED ?

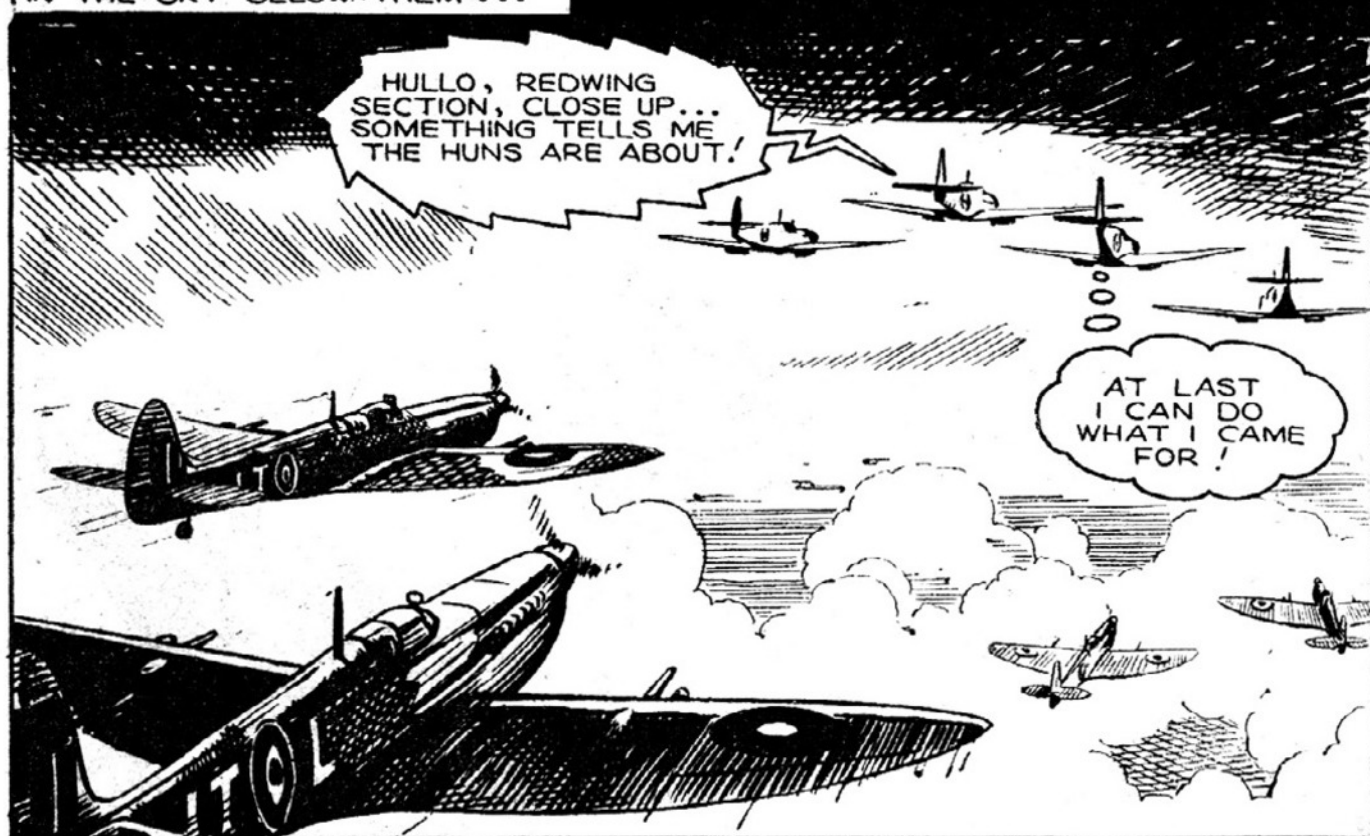


IN A FEW DAYS ALL HAD FORGOTTEN THE CANADIAN'S "BIG BLACK". THERE WAS NO TIME IN THE LIFE OF A FIGHTER PILOT TO BROOD OVER PAST MISTAKES. A NEW SPITFIRE WAS FOUND AND HE WAS BRIEFED FOR A DAWN SWEEP OVER FRANCE...

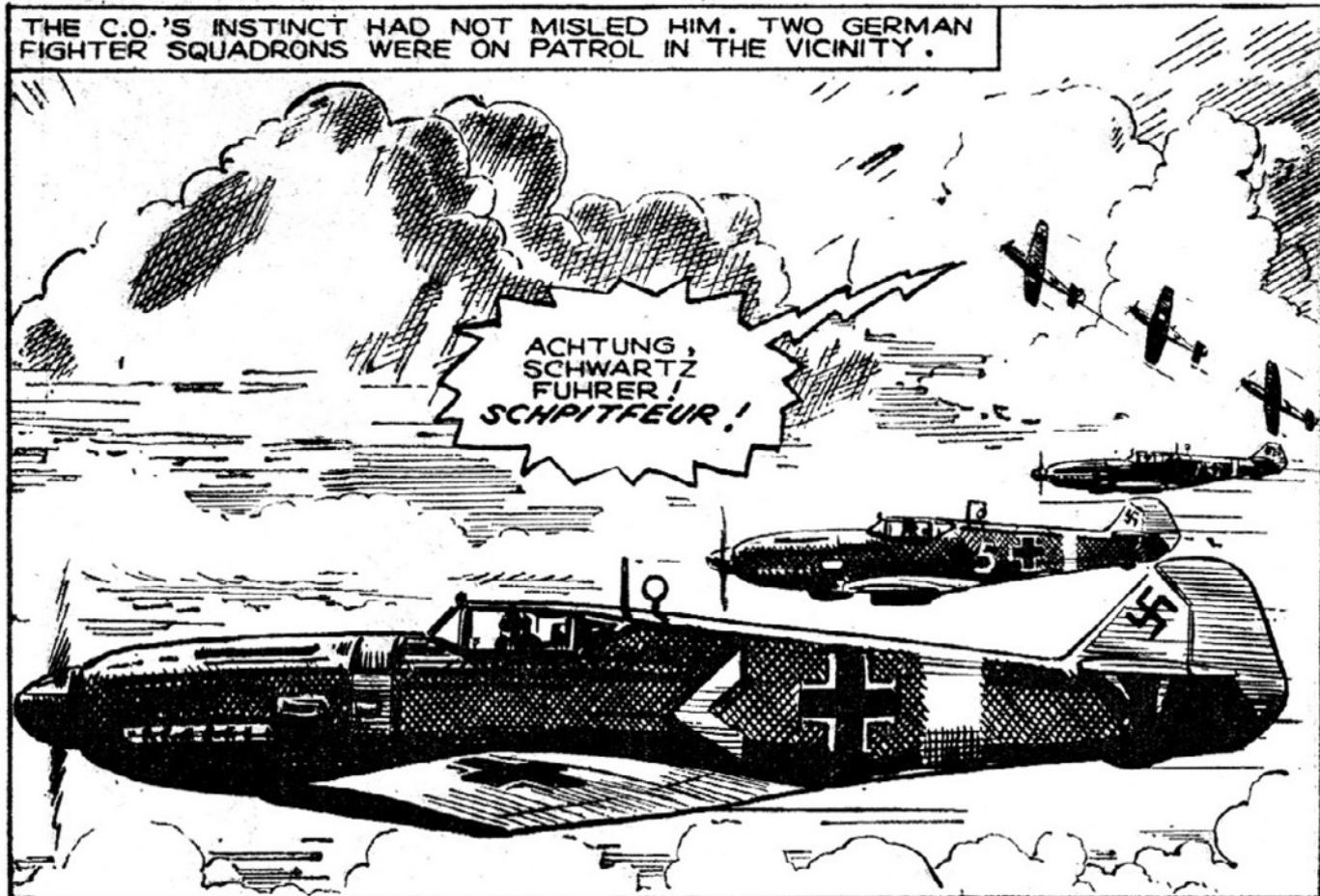


Breaking Point

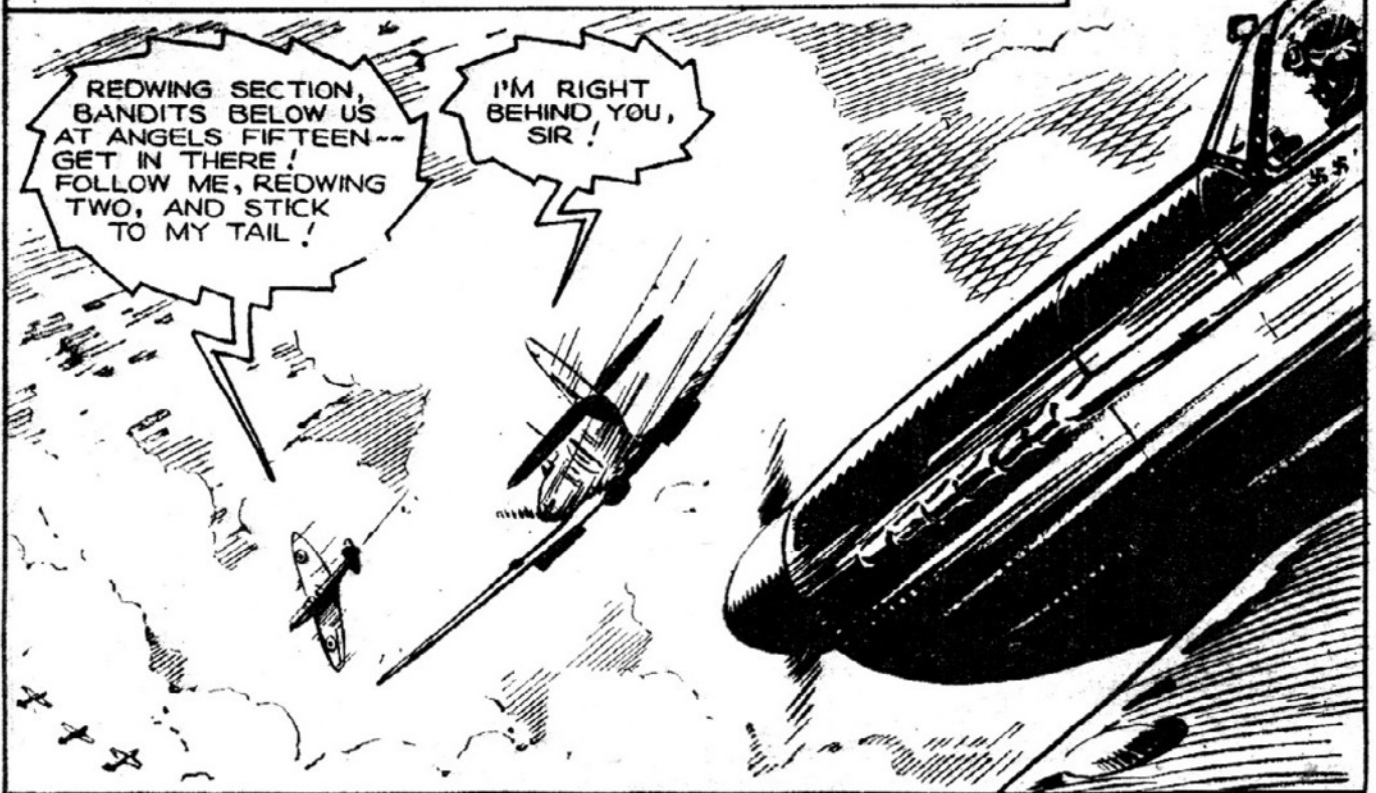
THE FIRST LIGHT OF DAWN FOUND THE SQUADRON HIGH OVER NORTHERN FRANCE. WOULD THE ENEMY COME OUT AND FIGHT? NOTHING MOVED IN THE SKY BELOW THEM...



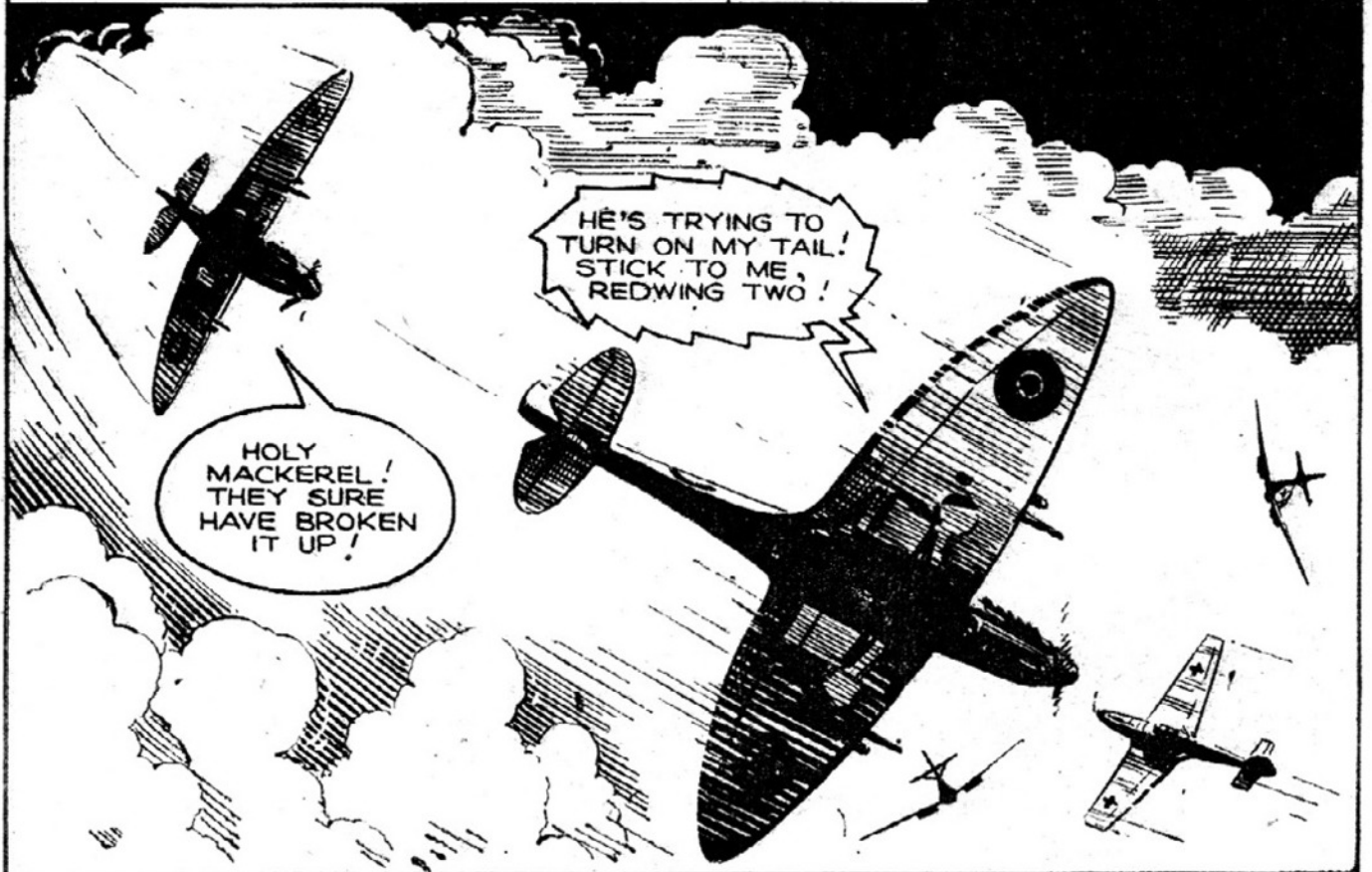
THE C.O.'S INSTINCT HAD NOT MISLED HIM. TWO GERMAN FIGHTER SQUADRONS WERE ON PATROL IN THE VICINITY.



BY THE TIME THE BRITISH SQUADRON SIGHTED THE GERMANS, THE GERMAN LEADER, WARNED BY RADAR, HAD ALREADY SENT A SECTION UP INTO THE SUN ...



THE C.O. AND BRAD LEWIS PEELED OFF AND LANCED DOWN INTO THE GERMAN SQUADRON. BUT JUST AS THE C.O.'S FIRST BURST WAS ABOUT TO BE FIRED ...



Breaking Point

BRAD SKILFULLY FOLLOWED HIS LEADER CLOSELY IN HIS TIGHT TURN AND SAW THE C.O.'S ADVERSARY SUDDENLY EXPLODE IN A GOUT OF FLAME AND BLACK SMOKE. AHEAD OF HIM, AN UNWARY MESSERSCHMITT SHOT SKYWARD, AND BRAD'S EYES GLEAMED...

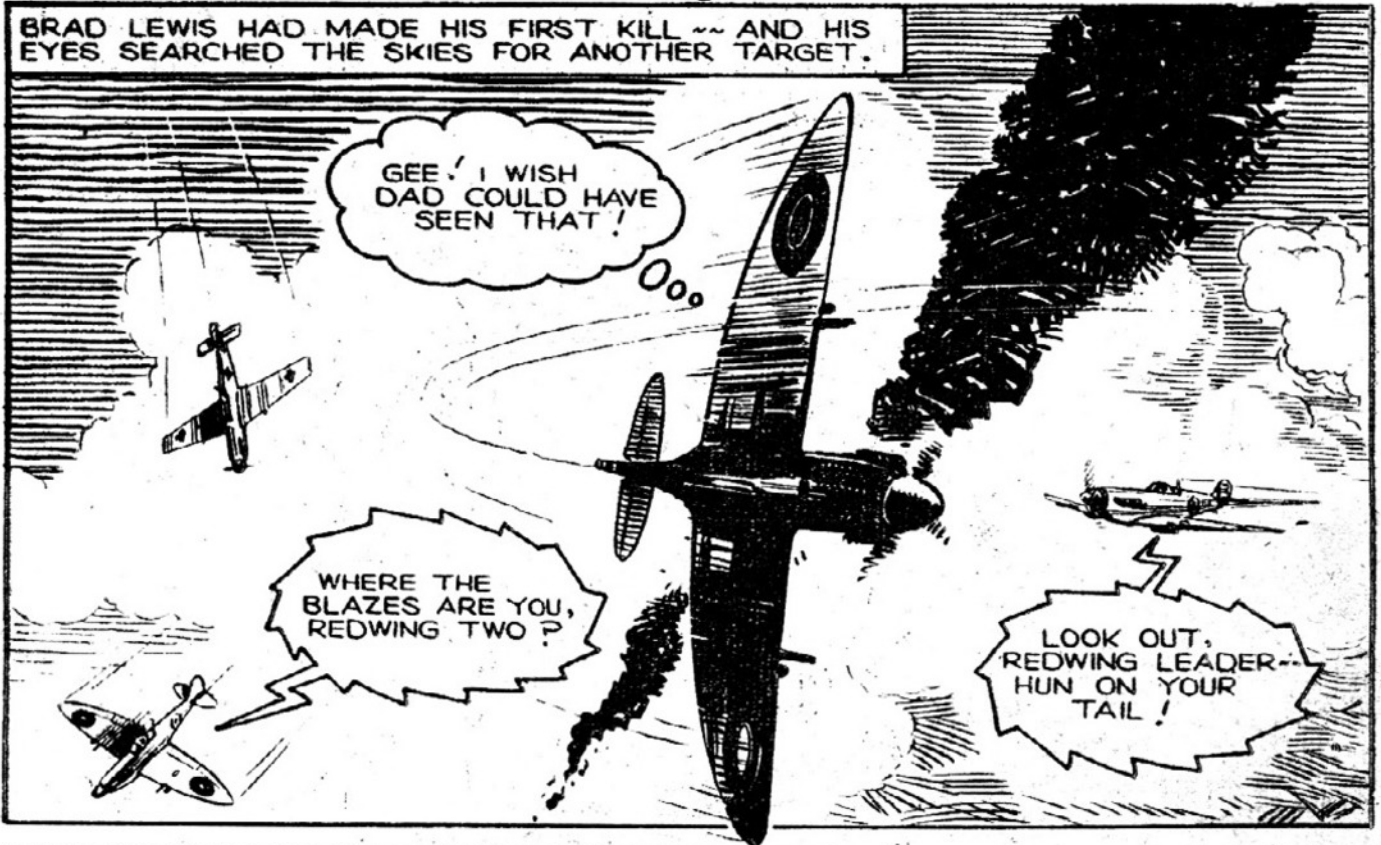
OH BOY, OH BOY!
A SITTING DUCK!

NICE WORK,
NUMBER TWO--
KEEP ON MY TAIL!
YOU'RE DOING FINE!
HEY, REDWING
NUMBER TWO,
WHERE ARE
YOU GOING?

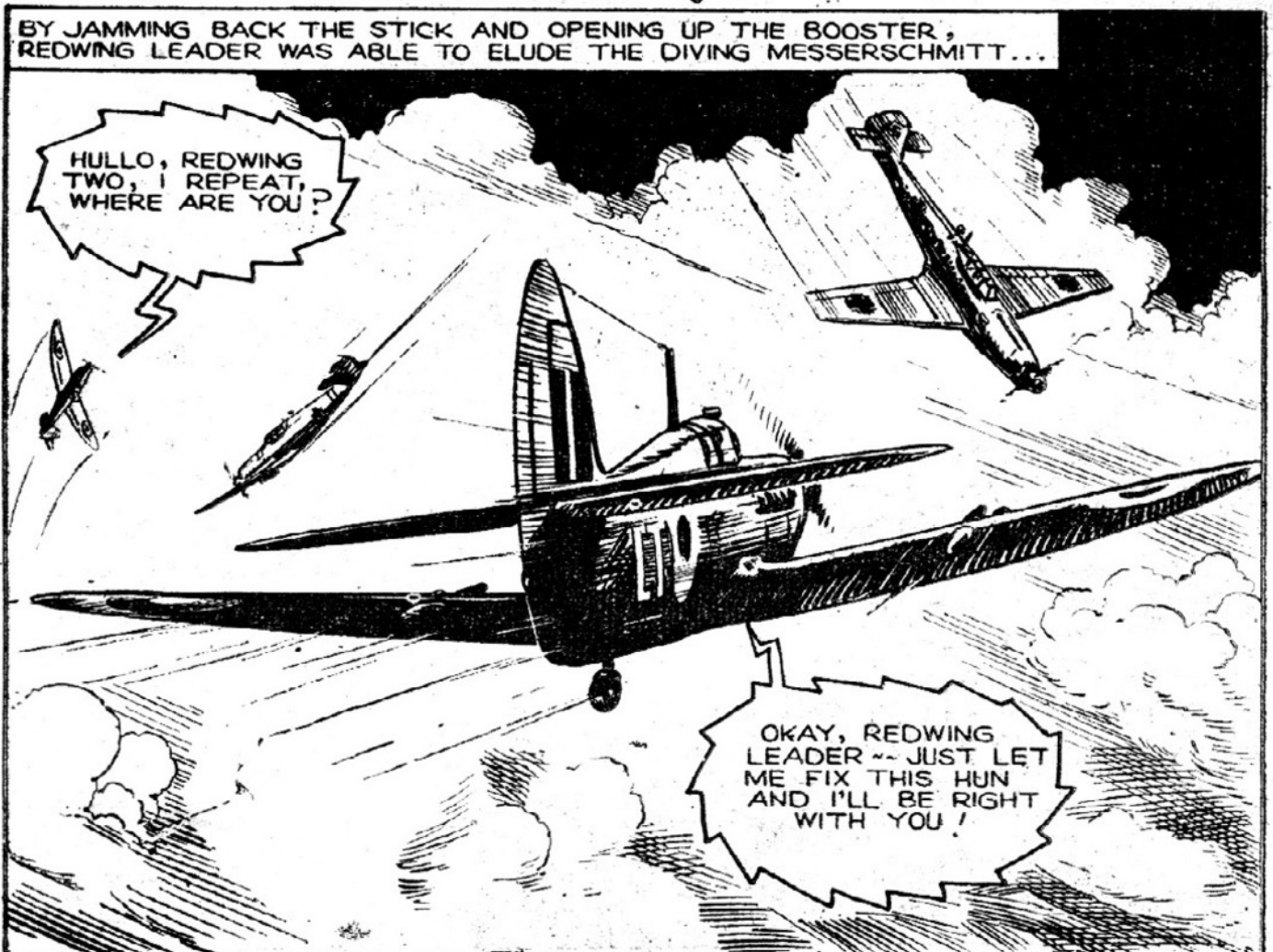
BUT BRAD LEWIS' EARS WERE ONLY TUNED TO THE SHRIEK OF HIS "MERLIN" ENGINE AS HE BROKE AWAY FROM THE TURN AND FOLLOWED HIS NEW FOUND ENEMY!

GET A
LOAD OF
THAT!

BRAD LEWIS HAD MADE HIS FIRST KILL -- AND HIS EYES SEARCHED THE SKIES FOR ANOTHER TARGET.



BY JAMMING BACK THE STICK AND OPENING UP THE BOOSTER, REDWING LEADER WAS ABLE TO ELUDE THE DIVING MESSERSCHMITT...



Breaking Point

SO INTENT WAS THE CANADIAN'S ATTENTION ON HIS TARGET THAT HE HAD OMITTED TO LOOK IN HIS REAR VIEW MIRROR. EVEN AS HIS FIRE RIPPED INTO THE ME.109, A SHOUT OF WARNING CRACKLED IN HIS EARPHONES ...



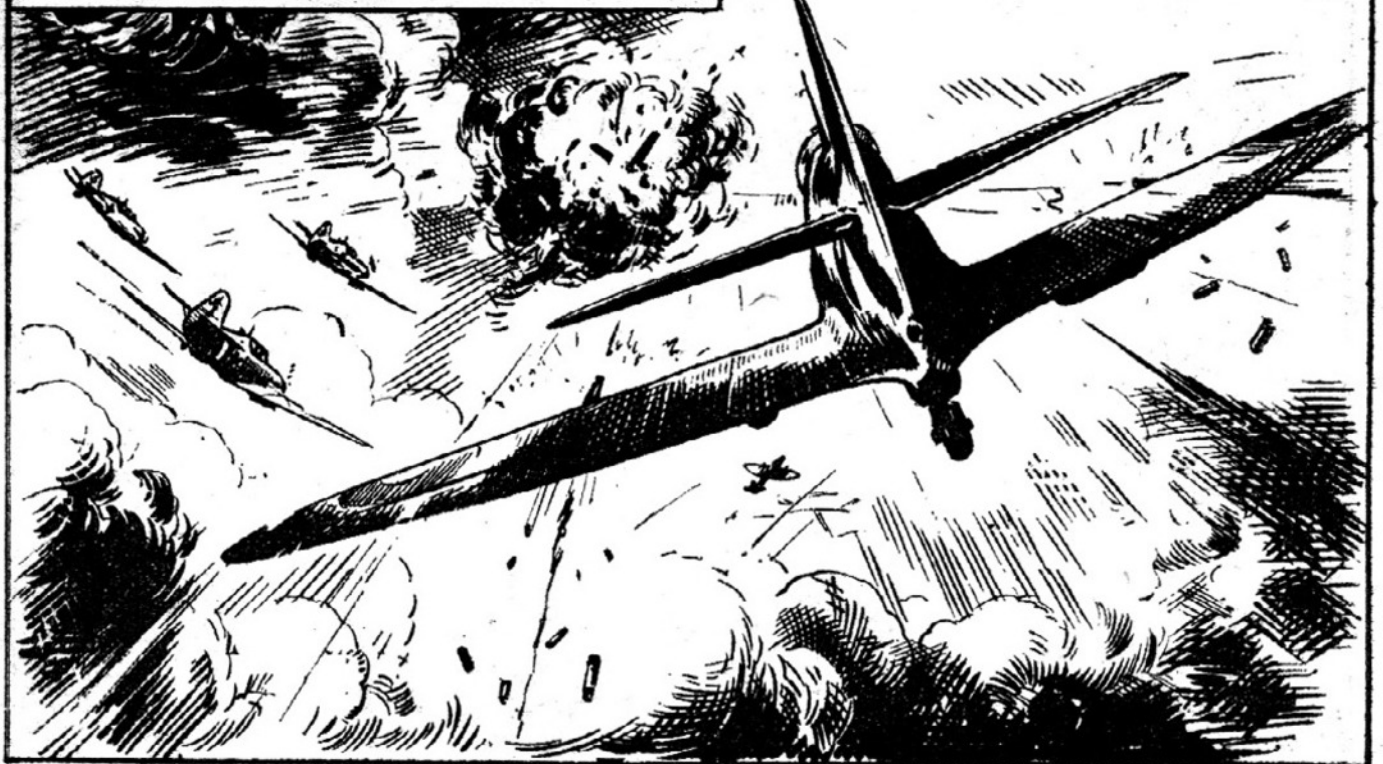
SIX MESSERSCHMITTS WERE CLOSING HUNGRILY ON THE ISOLATED SPITFIRE ...



SWIFT AS THOUGHT, BRAD THREW HIS FIGHTER INTO A GREAT SOARING LOOP...

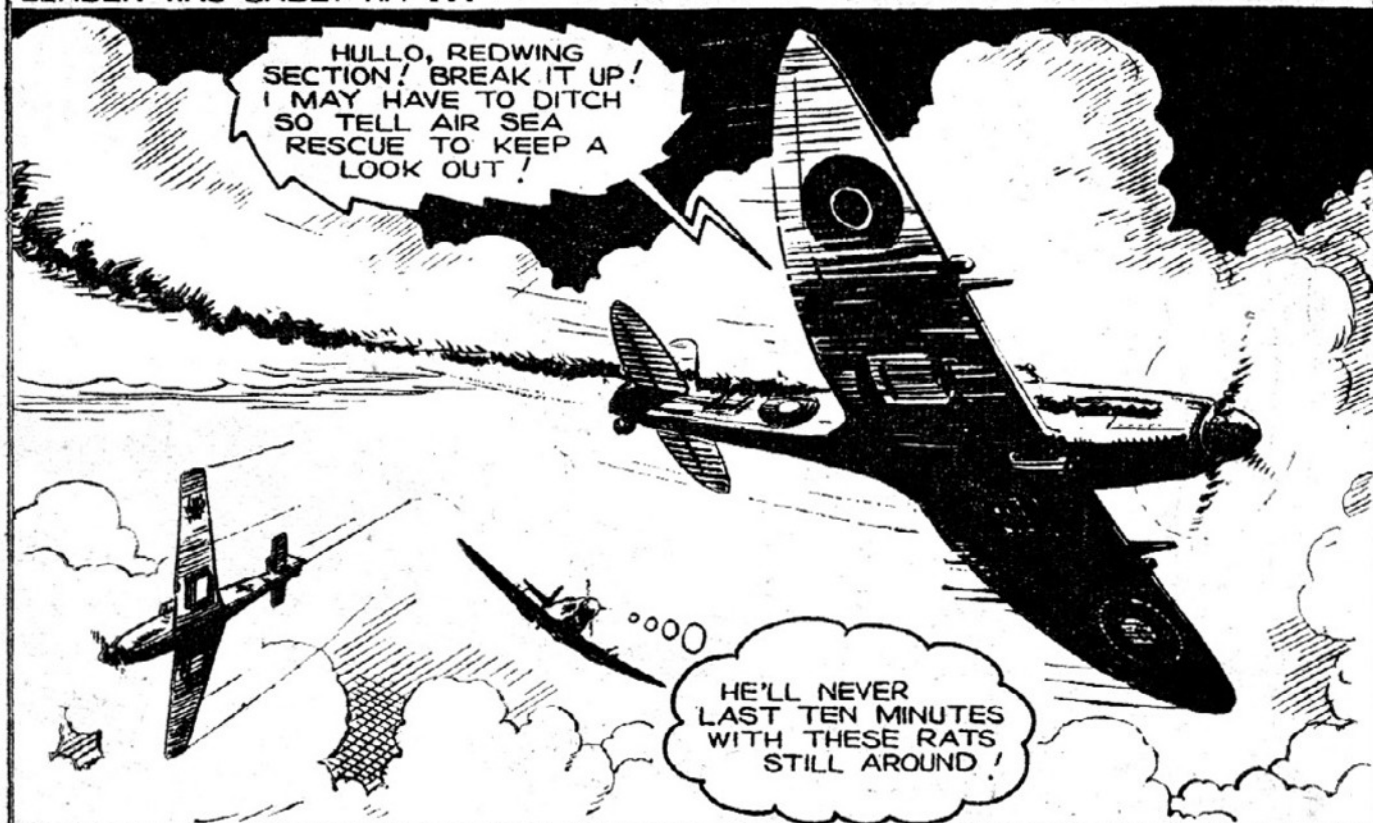


HE ROLLED NEATLY OFF THE TOP AND FOUND A TARGET BIG IN HIS SIGHTS. HIS GUNS HAMMERED INTO INSTANT, VIOLENT LIFE. BUT THE OTHER GERMANS WERE STILL DIVING -- AFTER THE SPITFIRES' LEADER...

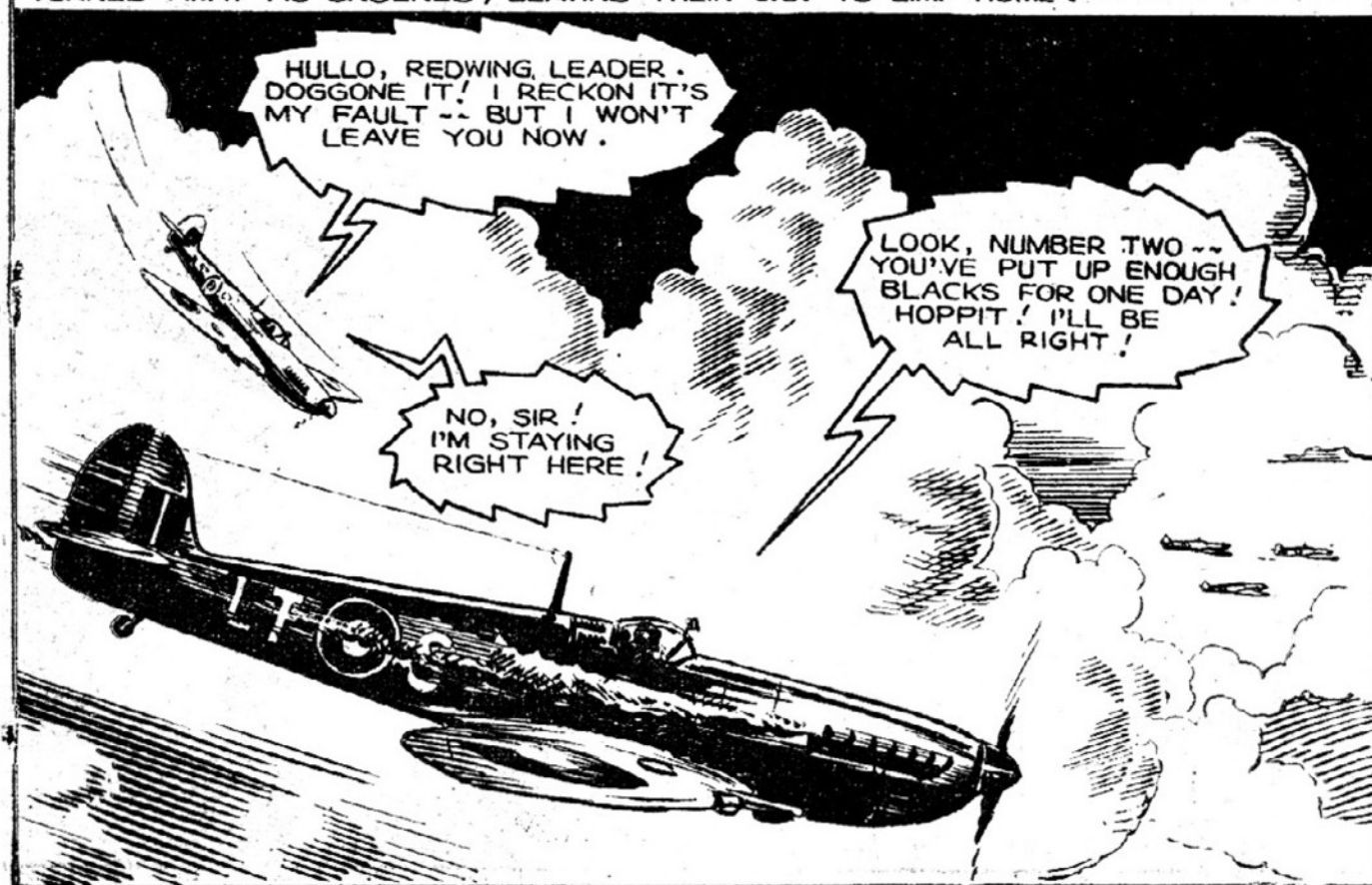


Breaking Point

THEIR LEADING FIGHTER TOOK A BURST AT THE BRITISH C.O. ALTHOUGH THE GERMAN WAS NOT IN THE AIR LONG ENOUGH TO COMPLETE HIS ATTACK, REDWING LEADER WAS BADLY HIT ...



BUT THE GERMANS HAD HAD ENOUGH! RELUCTANTLY THE REDWING SECTION TURNED AWAY AS ORDERED, LEAVING THEIR C.O. TO LIMP HOME.



NEARLY AN HOUR AFTER THE SQUADRON HAD LANDED, THE TWO SPITFIRES HEDGE-HOPPED INTO THE AERODROME CIRCUIT...



AFTER BREAKFAST, THE C.O. SENT FOR BRAD LEWIS.





BRAD LEWIS WAS THUNDERSTRUCK!



Chapter 4 THE R.A.F. WAY

IT WAS SIX LONG MONTHS BEFORE BRAD LEWIS WAS AGAIN OPERATIONAL. BOMBER PILOTS WERE TO HIM NO MORE THAN BUS DRIVERS AND IT WAS A BITTER, UNENTHUSIASTIC MAN WHO REPORTED AT NUMBER 759 SQUADRON OF BOMBER COMMAND ...



IT WAS THE TIME OF THE GREAT RUHR RAIDS. A TIME WHEN ONLY ONE CREW IN THREE FINISHED THEIR TOUR OF THIRTY OPERATIONS! IT TOOK MORE THAN A FRUSTRATED FIGHTER PILOT TO MAKE A BOMBER PILOT ...



THE CANADIAN STROLLED OUT TO DISPERSAL. HIS NEW CREW WERE DOING THEIR DAILY INSPECTION. AS HE APPROACHED -- THE SIGHT OF THE MASSIVE POWER OF THE GREAT MACHINE STIRRED SOME INTEREST IN HIS REBEL MIND ...



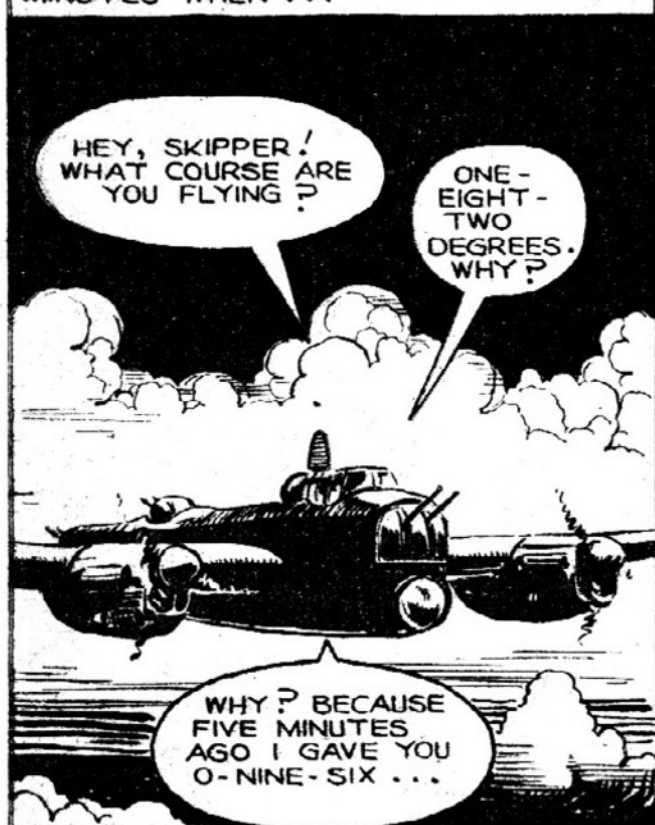
PILOT AND CREW EYED EACH OTHER SPECULATIVELY ...





Breaking Point

THEY HAD BEEN FLYING TOWARDS THE RENDEZVOUS FOR SEVERAL MINUTES WHEN ...



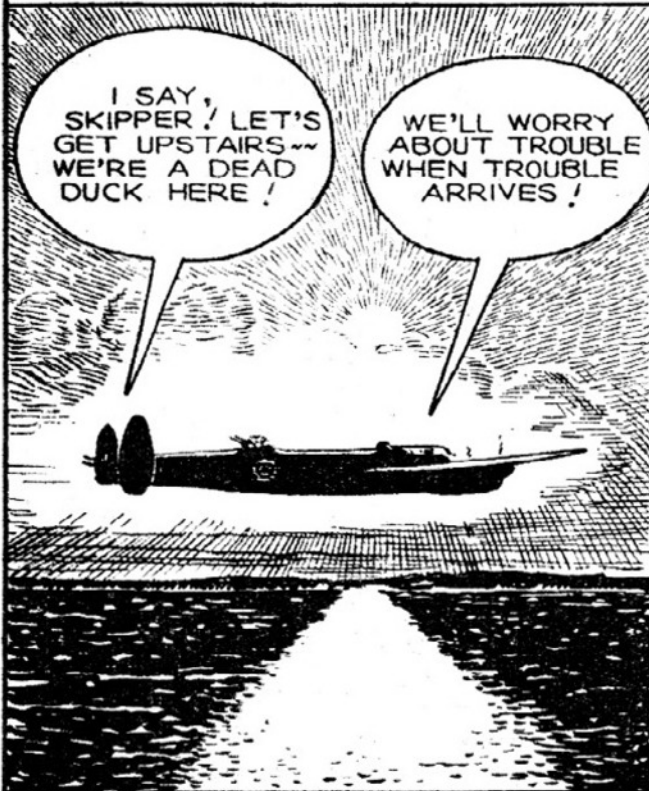
THE NAVIGATOR'S ICY TONE DID NOT PLEASE BRAD ...



THE MIGHTY FORCE OF BOMBERS CONVERGED ON THE RENDEZVOUS POINT BEFORE THEY SET COURSE FOR THE ENEMY COAST. IT WAS A TIME FOR KEEPING TO SCHEDULE AND TO HEIGHT!



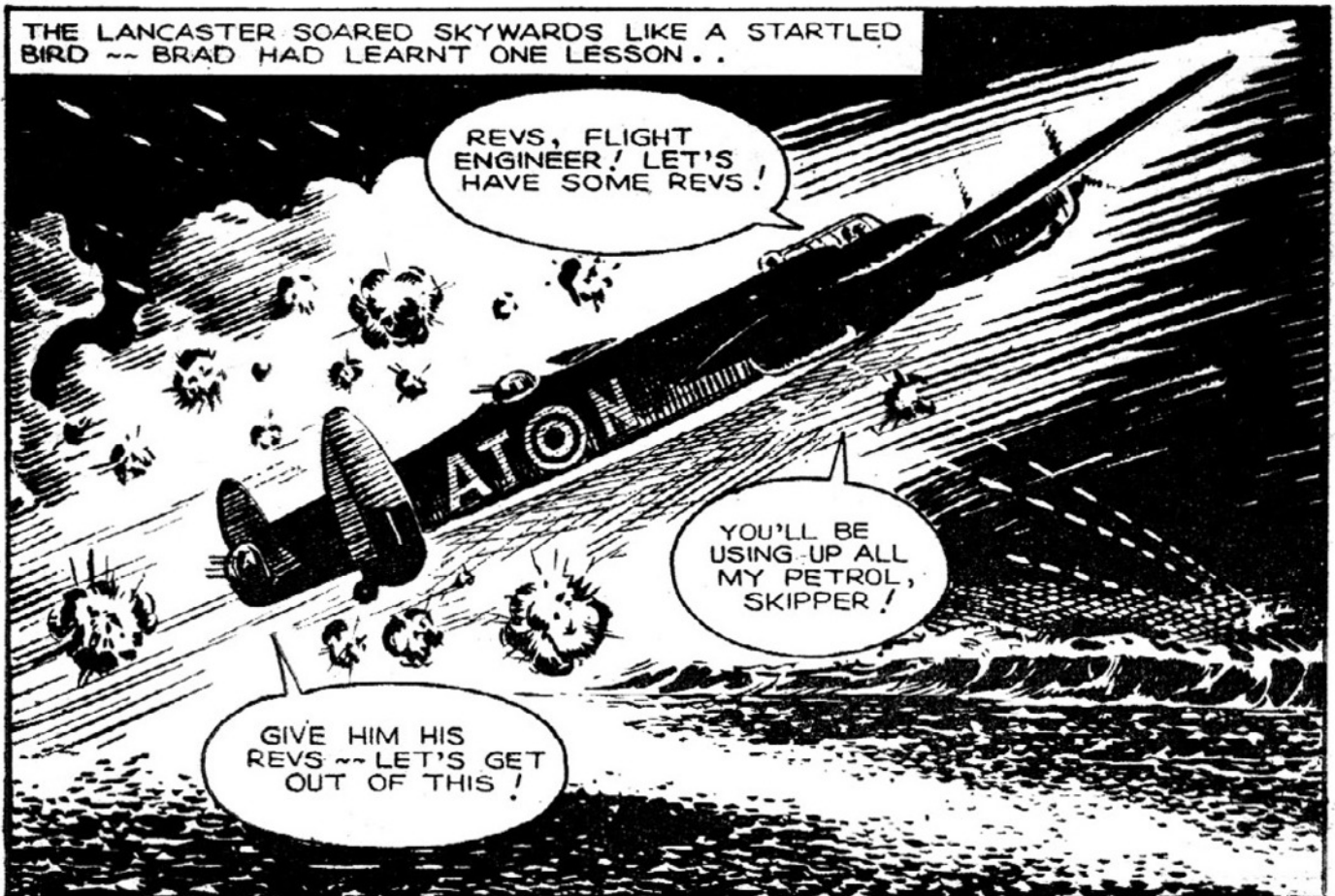
BUT THE CANADIAN WAS IN NO MOOD TO LISTEN TO ADVICE. THEY CAME DOWN TO SEA-LEVEL AND THUNDERED TOWARDS THE ENEMY COAST ...



ONE SURE WAY OF FINDING TROUBLE WAS TO APPROACH THE ENEMY COAST AT FIFTY FEET ...



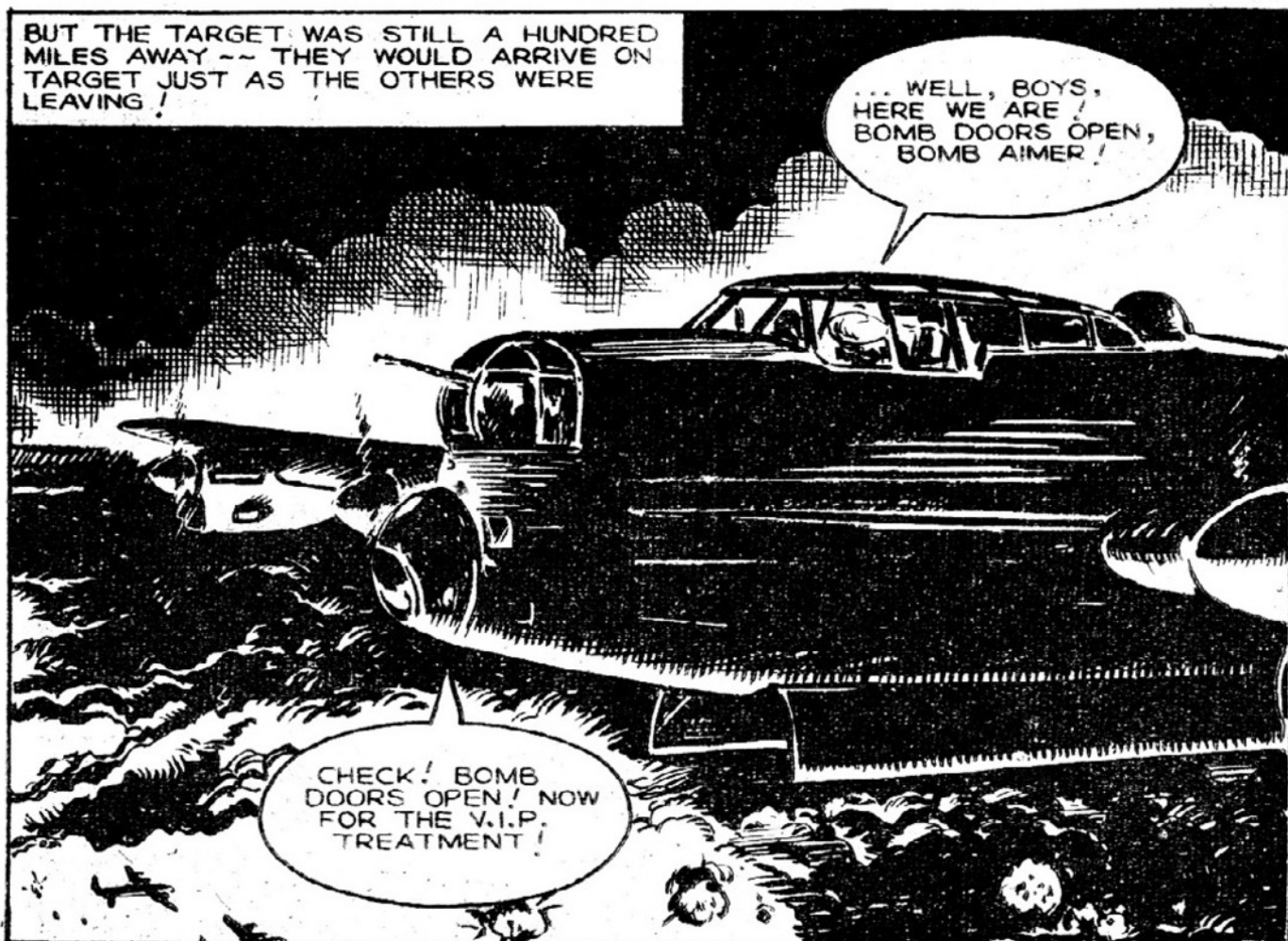
THE LANCASTER SOARED SKYWARDS LIKE A STARTLED BIRD~~ BRAD HAD LEARNT ONE LESSON..



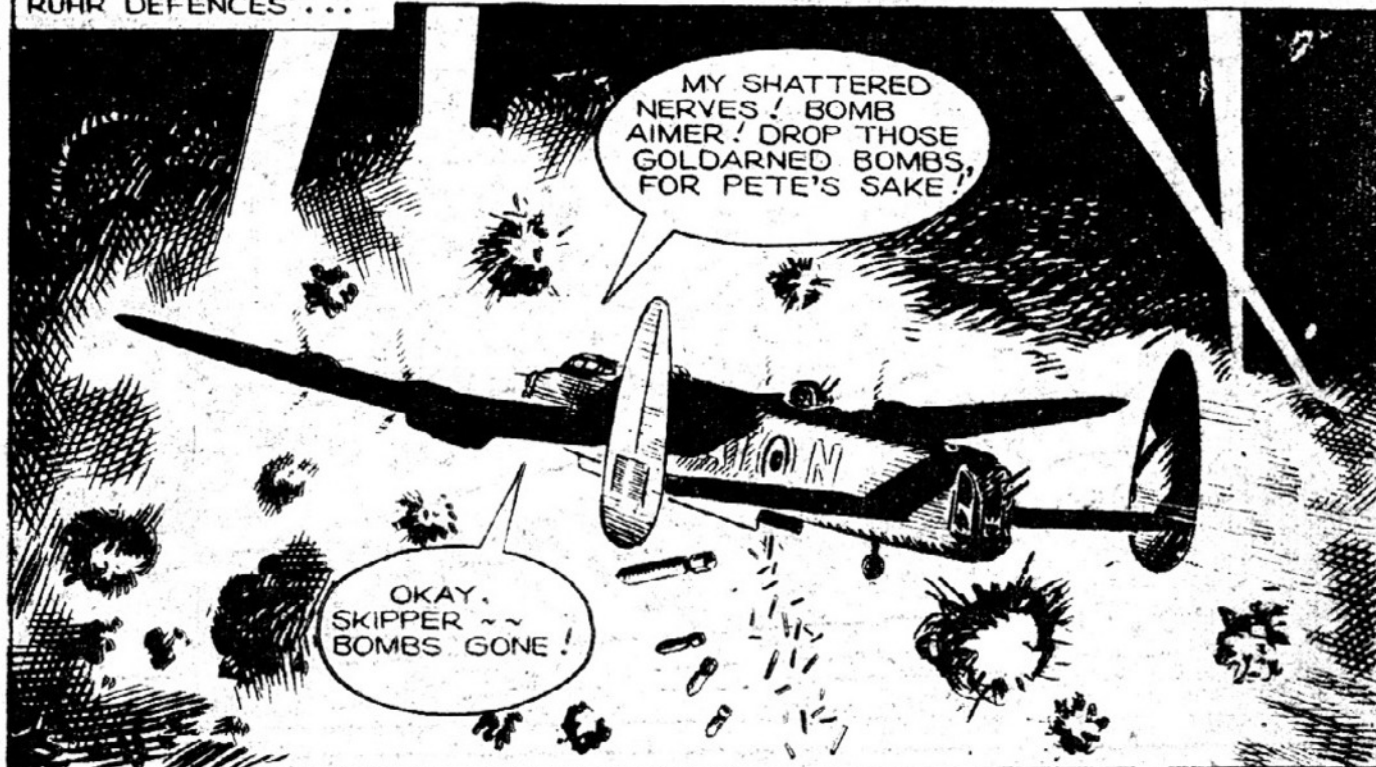
THE LIGHT FLAK HAD PIERCED THE PORT WING PETROL TANK. ALTHOUGH THE TANKS WERE SELF-SEALING, THEY HAD LOST NEARLY A HUNDRED GALLONS. THE LIMPING AIRCRAFT CLIMBED UP INTO THE HOSTILE GERMAN SKY.



BUT THE TARGET WAS STILL A HUNDRED MILES AWAY -- THEY WOULD ARRIVE ON TARGET JUST AS THE OTHERS WERE LEAVING!



IT WAS THE BOMB AIMER'S TURN TO BE RIGHT! AS THEY RAN UP ON THE TARGET THEY WERE EXPOSED TO THE UNDIVIDED ATTENTION OF THE RUHR DEFENCES ...

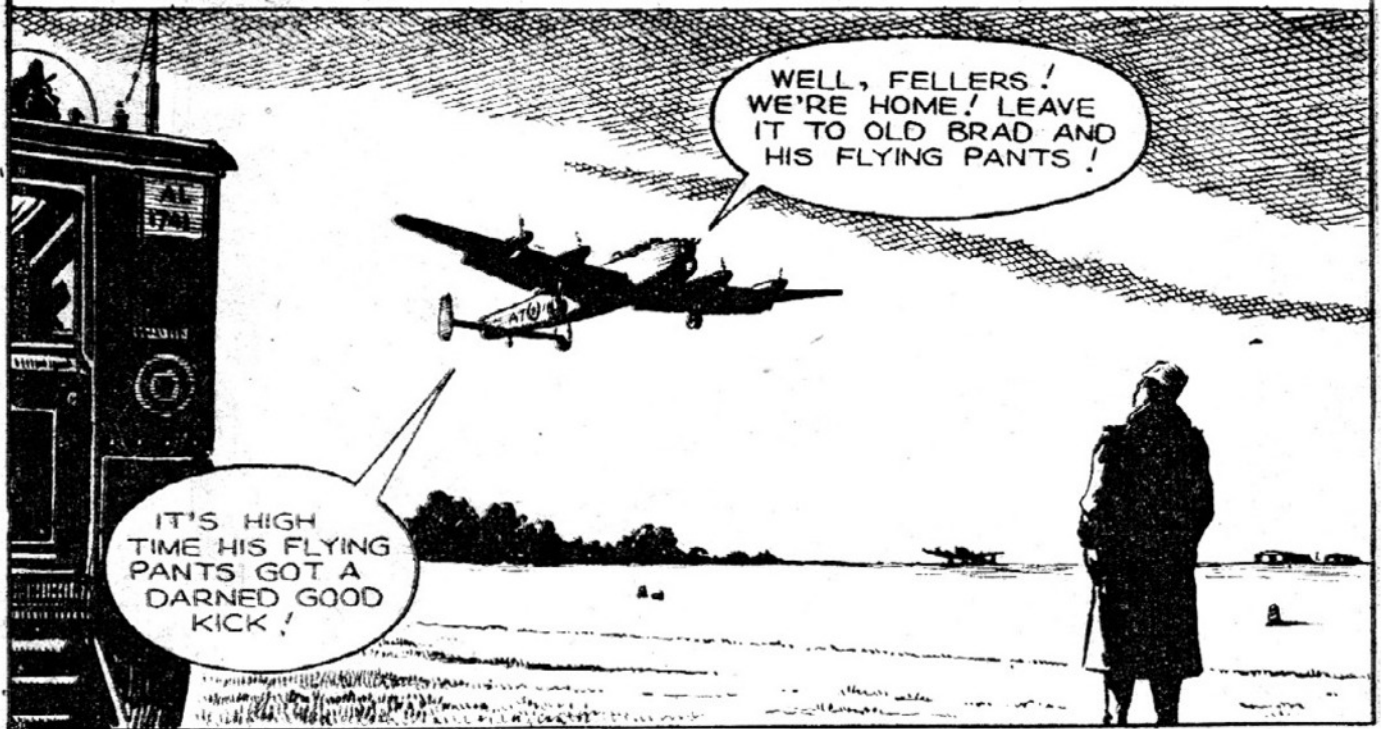


BRAD FLUNG THE GREAT MACHINE INTO A TIGHT TURN AND WEAVERD FRANTICALLY BETWEEN THE PROBING FINGERS OF SEARCHLIGHTS AND THE SERRIED BARRAGES OF HEAVY FLAK ...



Breaking Point

IT WAS TWO AND A HALF HOURS LATER BEFORE THE WELCOME BEACON AT BASE FLASHED ITS CODE LETTERS AT THE HOMING LANCASTER ...



IN THE DAWN LIGHT, BRAD LEWIS' CREW FOLLOWED HIM IN A NEAR STATE OF MUTINY TO THE WAITING TRANSPORT ...



AT BREAKFAST, THE NAVIGATOR SPOKE HIS MIND TO THE CANADIAN PILOT ...

I'M SORRY, BUT UNLESS YOU TAKE MORE INTEREST IN WHAT YOU'RE DOING, WE ALL INTEND TO ASK FOR A TRANSFER!



WELL, YOU DO JUST THAT. IT'S A FREE COUNTRY -- I DON'T THINK!

BUT, YOU SEE -- BENEATH ALL YOUR 'BULL', I RECKON YOU'RE A DARNED GOOD PILOT!

THE NAVIGATOR'S FINAL REMARK SUDDENLY CHECKED BRAD'S RAPIDLY RISING ANGER. THIS WAS THE FIRST REAL WORD OF PRAISE HE HAD BEEN GIVEN THROUGHOUT HIS WHOLE CAREER IN THE R.A.F. THERE WAS A LONG PAUSE ...

I GUESS YOU GUYS ARE RIGHT! I'M SORRY! TELL 'EM FROM ME THAT IF THEY STICK ALONG, I'LL SEE THEM SAFELY THROUGH THEIR OPS!



I WAS HOPING YOU'D SAY THAT... BUT I SUGGEST YOU TELL THEM YOURSELF!

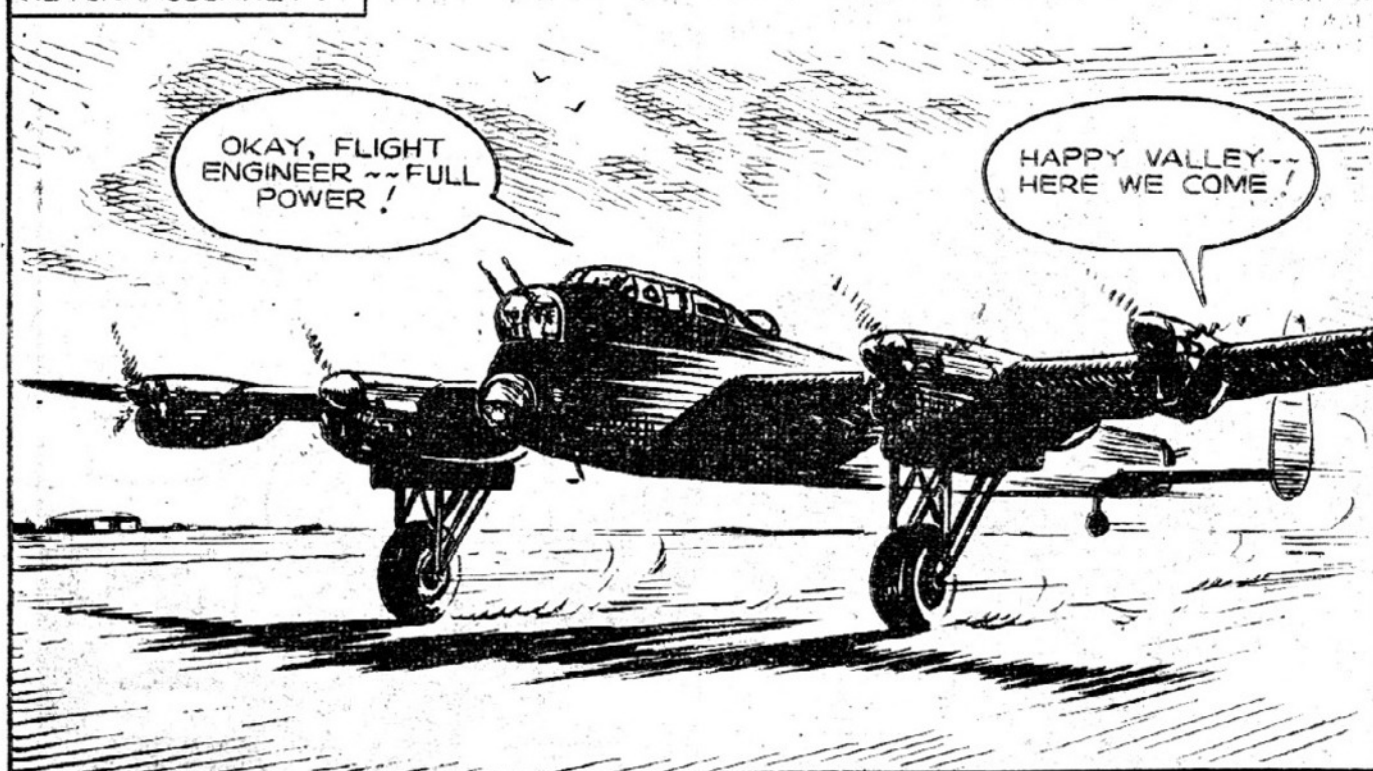
WHEN BRAD SPOKE TO THE CREW, HIS OBVIOUS SINCERITY EARNED HIM A GRUDGING CONSENT ...

WELL, FELLERS, WHAT DO YOU SAY?

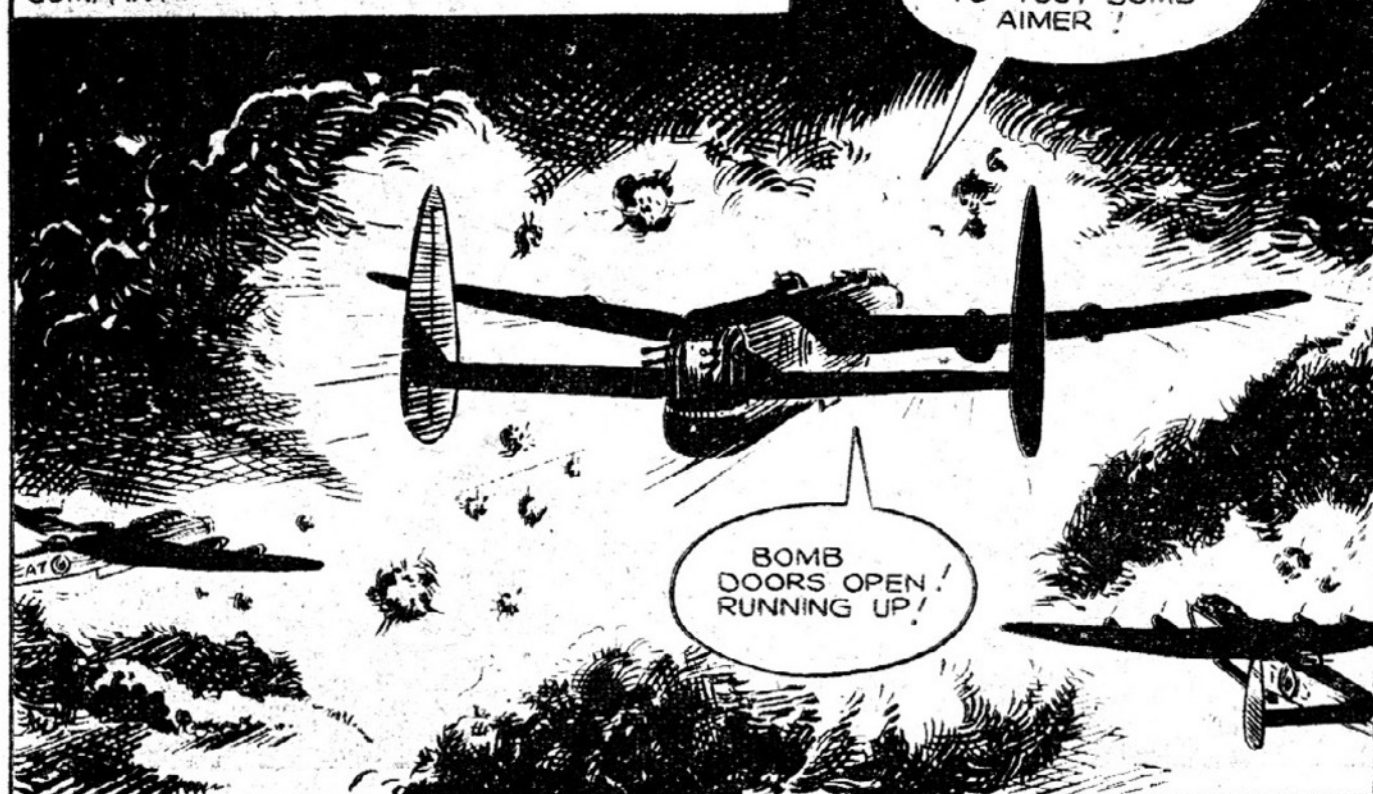


OKAY, SKIPPER! WE'LL DO ANOTHER TRIP -- THEN WE'LL TELL YOU WHAT WE THINK!

THE RUHR WAS ONCE AGAIN THE TARGET. THE MET-MAN HAD WARNED THE CREWS AT BRIEFING THAT BAD WEATHER MIGHT BE EXPECTED ON THE RETURN JOURNEY.



THE TRIP TO THE TARGET WAS QUIET AND UNEVENTFUL. BRAD LEWIS AT LAST LEARNED THE MEANING OF "CREW CO-OPERATION". IT WAS A GOOD FEELING TO BE PART OF A TEAM. IT WAS COMFORTING, TOO, TO KNOW THAT YOU WERE FACING DANGER IN GOOD COMPANY.



THEY WERE BOMBING IN THE THIRD WAVE. THE TARGET WAS WELL ALIGHT, BUT THE FLAK WAS GETTING DEADLY ACCURATE. JUST AS THE BOMB AIMER SANG OUT THE MAGIC WORDS "BOMBS GONE" -- **IT HAPPENED!**



THE FLIGHT ENGINEER SPRANG FORWARD BUT ALREADY BRAD HAD RIGHTED THE CRAZILY TILTED AIRCRAFT. HE KNEW THAT HE HAD TO SEE "HIS AIRCRAFT" IN AND "HIS" CREW SAFELY ON THE DECK, BEFORE HE WORRIED ABOUT THE STEEL SPLINTER IN HIS ARM!



BRAD'S HEAD SPUN DIZZILY AND AGONISING JABS OF PAIN MADE HIS LEFT ARM ALMOST USELESS, BUT HE HELD THE GREAT BOMBER ON A LEVEL COURSE. SUDDENLY HIS EYES NARROWED -- A COLD FRONT LOOMED AHEAD!



Breaking Point

BUT IN THAT MOMENT OF EXTREME PERIL, WITH THE ODDS STACKED AGAINST HIM, BRAD LEWIS FELT REALLY HAPPY FOR THE FIRST TIME IN HIS R.A.F. CAREER. AT LAST HE WAS A VITAL, INDISPENSABLE PART OF THE MACHINE.

HEAR THIS, YOU GUYS!
HEAR THIS WELL! I'M
GOING TO TAKE YOU BACK
IN THE OLD BACKWOODS
WAY--BY THE SEAT
OF MY PANTS!

BUFFETED BY VIOLENT AIR CURRENTS, THE CONTROLS STIFF AND HEAVY WITH THE ICE PACKING THE WING SURFACES--BRAD KEPT THE LANCASTER FLYING. THREE TENSE HOURS LATER HE BROKE THROUGH THE THICK CLOUD BARRIER. **TEN MILES AHEAD WINKED THE AERODROME BEACON!**

HULLO VERA... THIS
IS BONZO 'N NUTS'...
MAY I PANCAKE, PLEASE?
AND SAY! IS THERE A
DOCTOR IN THE HOUSE?

HULLO BONZO
'N NUTS'! YOU
MAY PANCAKE! WE
HAVE A DOCTOR--
WE'VE GOT THE LOT!

THE GREAT BOMBER TOUCHED DOWN LIGHT AS A
FEATHER--TAXIED TO DISPERSAL--AND THEN ITS
PILOT SLUMPED SENSELESS OVER THE CONTROLS!

VERY GENTLY, HIS CREW CARRIED HIM FROM THE AIRCRAFT AND WATCHED HIM BEING TAKEN TO SICK QUARTERS. NEXT MORNING, THEY WERE SURPRISED TO BE ACCOSTED BY THE C.O. AND A NEW PILOT AS THEY WENT TO THEIR DAILY INSPECTION...

THIS IS SQUADRON LEADER FFOLIOT, CHAPS! HE'S LOOKING FOR A CREW! YOU ARE JUST GOING THROUGH A TRIAL PERIOD WITH YOUR SKIPPER, SO NO HEARTS WOULD BE BROKEN IF YOU CHANGED OVER!

YES, BY JOVE, SIR! AWFULLY KEEN LOOKING LOT OF CHAPS, WHAT! MIND IF I LOOK ROUND?

WELL, SIR, WE HAVEN'T CLEANED UP YET AFTER LAST NIGHT'S PARTY!

THERE WAS A POLITE SILENCE AS THE C.O. AND HIS COMPANION WALKED BACK TO THE CAR -- THEN ...

I'VE SEEN ONE LIKE HIM BEFORE, BLOKES -- UNDER A FLAT STONE! GIVE ME THAT SLAP-HAPPY CANADIAN -- ANY DAY OF THE WEEK!

HEAR, HEAR!



AND SO IT WAS, A FEW DAYS LATER,
BRAD LEWIS AND THE ROYAL AIR FORCE
AT LAST STARTED TO FLY TOGETHER...



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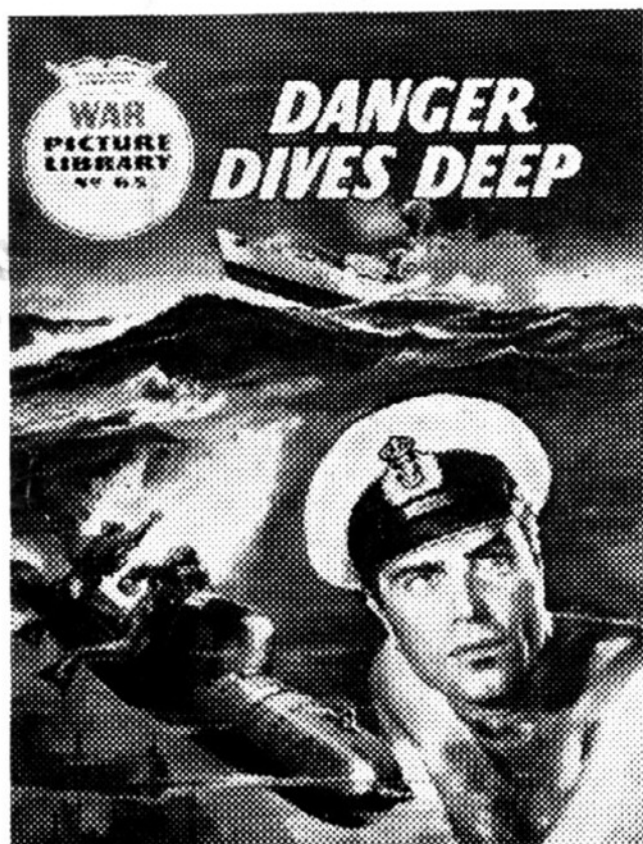
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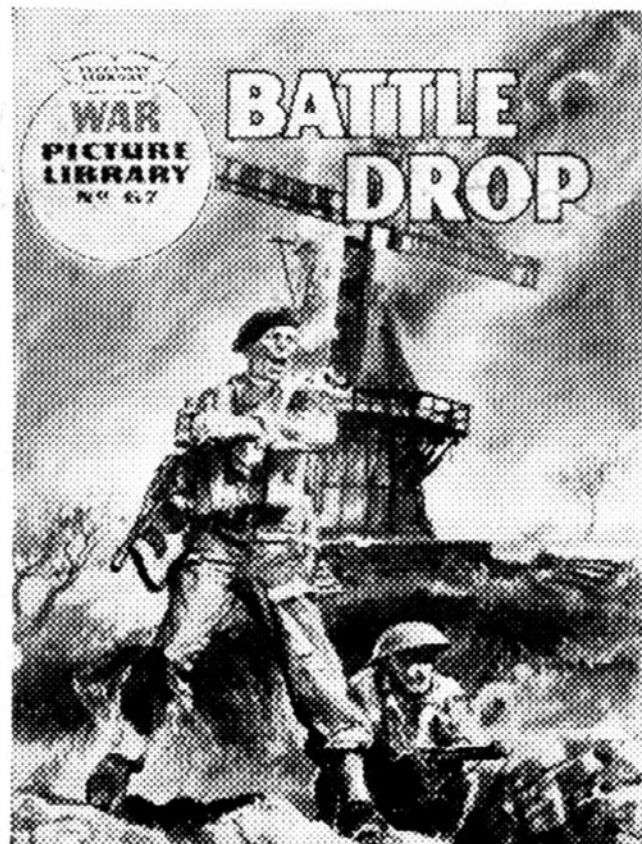
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